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*Marie Leszczyńska.*

# REMARKABLE WOMEN OF FRANCE

(FROM 1431 TO 1749)

BY

LIEUT.-COLONEL ANDREW C. P. HAGGARD, D.S.O.

AUTHOR OF "SIDELIGHTS ON THE COURT OF FRANCE," "LOUIS XVI. AND MARIE ANTOINETTE," "THE AMOURS OF HENRI DE NAVARRE AND OF MARGUERITE DE VALOIS," "THE FRANCE OF JOAN OF ARC," "THE ROMANCE OF BAYARD,"  
"LOUIS XI. AND CHARLES THE BOLD," ETC., ETC.

WITH A FRONTISPIECE IN PHOTOGRAVURE AND  
SIXTEEN OTHER ILLUSTRATIONS IN HALF-TONE

LONDON

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DEDICATION TO THE BARONESS  
ALBERT D'ANETHAN

TO

MY DEAR SISTER

MARY D'ANETHAN

AN ARDENT STUDENT OF THE PAGES OF

FRENCH LITERATURE

WHOSE OWN LITERARY EFFORTS HAVE MET

WITH WELL-DESERVED SUCCESS

THIS WORK

IS AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED

ANDREW C. P. HAGGARD.

CAMP HAGGARD,  
VANCOUVER ISLAND,  
1914.



## PREFACE

IN many previous works it has been the Author's aim to depict the action of the rulers of France, their policies and social life. In the present volume he gives more intimate sketches of the remarkable women who, by their direct or reflex action, either ruled these rulers or, by their talents, profligacies, and extravagances, affected the whole course of public affairs. Although in some cases, such as that of Joan of Arc (of whose career the Author has already treated separately) and the charming Madame de Guyon, the aspirations of these women were lofty, it will be noticed that the general effect that they produced was deleterious, and calculated to lead France steadily onwards to the terrible upheaval and bloody scenes of the Revolution.

ANDREW C. P. HAGGARD.



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# Remarkable Women of France

## CHAPTER I

### From Joan to Marguerite de Valois

THE importance of women in France, which may be said to have commenced with the advent of Joan of Arc, continued through the centuries, influencing the lives of the Monarchs, the nobles, the Church, the people at large.

While, however, the daring of the Maid of Orleans, her ardent faith and single-mindedness of character, had for result the building up of the Monarchy upon a firm basis, in this she may be said to have stood alone. The action of such women, whether Queens or courtesans, whose names have stood out prominently in French history since the day of La Pucelle, has had an entirely different effect, that of lowering the French Kingship in the popular estimation.

Joan, the girl of visions, appealed directly to the heart of the Frenchman of her day, the more so that, while pleading for her Charles le Dauphin,

while storming walls for him sword in hand at the head of a fierce soldiery, she displayed the strongest religious tendency, making of the Holy Virgin and the Saints the direct sponsors of both her assertions and her deeds. From her time onwards a careful study of the women of France (in which term we include those of foreign extraction who made their home on Gallia's shores) fails to reveal the existence of many whose activities and agencies did not lead up to the inevitable cataclysm which, instead of affirming the Monarchy, was to sweep it away.

Joan having been burned at Rouen in May 1431, her good works perished with her, and when the King of her creation, Charles VII., himself had passed away in turn, to be succeeded by a Louis XI., we perceive no woman of note to influence in any beneficial direction. The elder daughter of this pitiful Monarch, Anne de Beaujeu, is the next whom we find upon the French page to whom we may attribute any importance, and, by her energy and ambition, it must be conceded that Anne did something for the Crown. Yet the good that she did with one hand, by bringing about the marriage of Anne of Brittany to her brother Charles VIII., this very virile Princess more than counterbalanced when she sent away Marguerite of Austria, the child-bride of her brother. She thus opened up a long vista of hatred, which early culminated in the rivalry of Marguerite's nephew,

the Emperor Charles V., and François I., who succeeded Louis XII. on the throne of France.

Meanwhile, what had the various wives of Louis XII. done to enhance the prestige of the Monarchy? The first of these was Jeanne, the younger sister of Anne de Beaujeu. This daughter of Louis XI. was a poor, spiritless creature, said moreover to have been the victim of some slight deformity. She was, at all events, the victim of her husband, who contrived to induce Pope Alexander VI., the infamous Rodrigo Borgia, to annul his marriage. He next married Anne of Brittany, the widow of his predecessor and cousin Charles VIII., but while Louis XII. thus cemented the union of the Ducal Crown of Brittany with that of France, the influence of his second wife upon the destinies of the kingdom was in no way lasting.

The third wife of Louis XII., the red-haired, sixteen-year-old Mary Tudor, the sister of Henry VIII. of England, influenced the French King certainly, as she soon killed him, by the flow of her exuberant spirits and unceasing frivolity. We may pass over the two wives of his successor François I., Claude de France and Éléonore of Austria, with a mere mention, since far more importance is to be attributed to that King's three best known mistresses, Diane de Poitiers, Françoise de Foix, Comtesse de Châteaubriand, and Anne de Pisseleu, Duchesse d'Étampes. Of these, the most

remarkable was the first mentioned, who, having become in turn the mistress of Henri II., son of François I., overthrew the Duchesse d'Étampes when François died, and for some years practically ruled France.

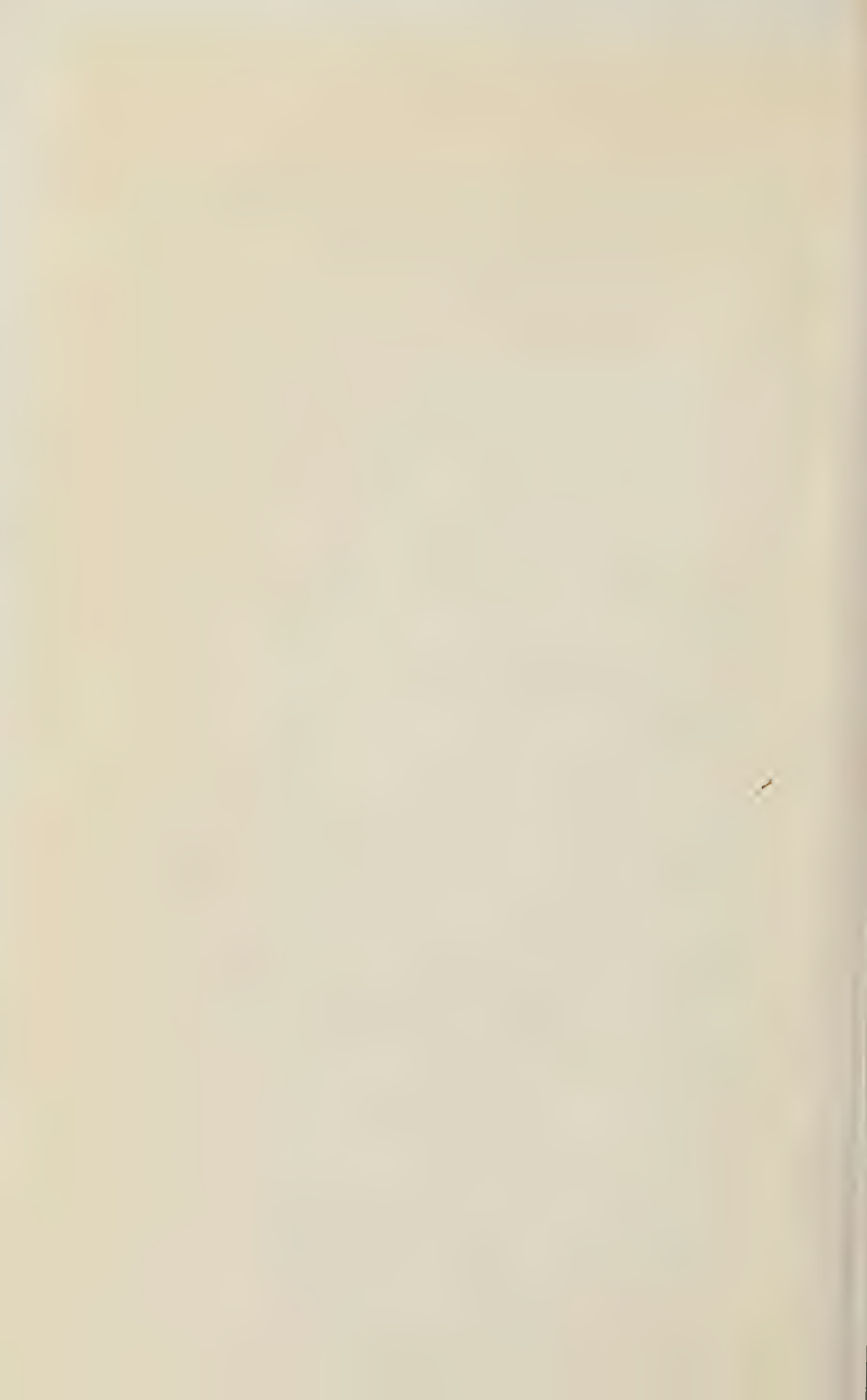
Diane de Poitiers was a remarkable woman, for several reasons. One of these was that, in an age when the French lady was not remarkable for a love of cold water or early rising, she took a cold bath daily and was wont to be on horseback shortly after dawn. She preserved her youth and her beauty to a great age; at the age of fifty she had her portrait painted and statue moulded in the nude, to crush her younger competitors by this exhibition of her finely moulded charms, and for twenty years longer Diane remained remarkably handsome. Cat-like in nature was Diane, however. Her spite towards Anne de Pisseleu was attended by cruelty, avarice, and vengeance, not unaccompanied by the downright robbery of her rival's jewellery. For many years Diane, now Duchesse de Valentinois, ruled Catherine de Médicis, the wife of her Royal lover—ruled her so completely that the Florentine woman can only have been said to have been allowed to exist in France by the protection of her husband's haughty paramour. When Henri II. died, killed accidentally by a Scottish knight at a tournament, the reign of Diane ceased. Then Catherine de Médicis asserted herself, and ordered the Duchesse de Valentinois to retire to her Château





JOAN OF ARC

From a Painting by M. Raymond Balze



d'Anet. The widow of the Sénéchal de Normandie and mistress of two Kings was followed into her retirement by the hatred of all who had had the misfortune to come under the clutch of her cat-like paw.

It is "a far cry to Loch Awe," and a long way from Diane de Poitiers, who retired from the Court in 1559, to the French Revolution! Nevertheless may we well look upon the elevation of this adulterous dame, who always dressed in black and white silk and was celebrated for her refined airs, as one of the earlier pegs driven into the coffin of the French Monarchy by the hands of Royalty itself.

The driving in of the pegs was, however, henceforth to be continued blithely enough. The hand to drive them really home was often that of a woman in high places, and the Queen of Henri II. did her share of the work.

Caterina de' Medici, to write her name in the Italian manner, was the daughter of the profligate young Lorenzo II. de' Medici, Duke of Urbino, and Madeleine de la Tour d'Auvergne, a Princess of the French Blood-Royal. She was great-niece of Pope Leo X. (Giovanni de' Medici), and more distantly connected with the illegitimate Giulio de' Medici, who followed Leo on the Papal throne as Clement VII.

Catherine was but fourteen years of age when, in October 1533, she was married by her kinsman

Pope Clement VII. at Marseilles to Henri de Valois, Duc d'Orléans, and from the year of her wedding until the date of the banishment of Diane from the Court the Florentine Princess was held of no account in Paris, where her husband having become King of France, was the first to deride his wife as coming from a family of merchants. For years Henri II. did not even live *maritalement* with his by no means attractive spouse. It was only owing to the promptings of the Duchesse de Valentinois that he at length consented to become the father of "Children of France," so as to be provided with heirs to the Crown. His first son François II., who married Mary, Queen of Scots, was only born in January 1544, eleven years after marriage. There were, however, then many other sons and daughters born to Henri and Catherine, including Charles IX. and Henri III., who in turn followed the short-lived François II. on the throne.

The policy of Catherine de Médicis, while controlling each of her sons successively, may be said to have been that of concentration in the power of the Crown, yet her character was shifty and her ways tortuous and cruel. It was when, in the reign of Charles IX., her daughter Marguerite had just been united in marriage to the Protestant Henri de Navarre, that she caused her son to instigate, and actually take part in, the horrible massacre of Saint-Bartholomew.

Although Charles IX. personally saved his cousin

and newly made brother-in-law from the dreadful slaughter, the action of the Queen-Mother, in thus setting Catholic against Huguenot at the very moment of their apparent union, was such as to cause the permanent disintegration of France until all religions were abolished by law in the time of the French Revolution.

Even in these comparatively early days, none did more to lower the Royalty of France in the popular estimation than the beautiful Marguerite de Valois whom we have just mentioned. While her husband Henri IV., the offspring of Albret and Bourbon, may, with his numerous and facile loves, well be compared to the lordly Chanticleer, ruler of a numerous harem of hens, his spouse was in no way behind him in the matter of her all too frequent amours. Commencing with the princely Henri de Guise in her fourteenth summer, or, as some say, earlier, with the Sires de Charrins and d'Entragues before she had completed her twelfth year, Marguerite displayed her amours before the eyes of the people until she died at the age of sixty-two. Little cared this daughter of Catherine de Médicis to what class her lover might belong, so long as she loved him, or thought that she loved him, for the moment.

Thus from one end of France to the other this Queen of France and Navarre was also known as the Queen of Love. The brilliant Vicomte de Turenne, the unfortunate La Mole, whom her love

brought to the scaffold, her brothers Henri III. and François, Duc d'Alençon, Don Juan of Austria, the half-brother of the Emperor Charles V., who admired her, but for political reasons eluded her wiles, the handsome Champvallon, by whom she was at last flouted, the Marquis de Canillac and the Seigneur de Lignerac, two of her gaolers whom she led in chains, Lignerac's brother Marcé, who was poisoned, the Squire d'Aubiac, by whom she had a son, and who was hanged on her account, Date de Saint-Julien, the page who was shot by another young man named Vermont out of jealousy, the equerry Bajaumont, who was attacked by rivals but made good his defence before the altar of a church—such were a few of the lovers of this very amorous Queen!

When Vermont shot Saint-Julien through the head while Queen Marguerite was hanging on her page's arm, the enamoured Princess tore off her garters, and cried out to the bystanders to hang her murderous but superseded lover with them. When Bajaumont was attacked in turn, she insisted upon her husband, Henri IV., who had divorced her, throwing his aggressor into a dungeon.

The satirical Henri, now the husband of Marie de Médicis, made great sport of her love for this man. His former Queen had abandoned her fine Hôtel de Sens after hanging Vermont in front of her windows, saying that, from its sad recollections of Saint-Julien, she could live there no longer.



Henri, who had been compelled to assist Marguerite to establish herself in a new palace at Issy, became therefore much disturbed when Bajaumont fell ill with a bad cold, concerning which his ex-Queen made a terrible outcry. The story is told of Henri de Navarre that he, in mockery, then promised presents to all of Marguerite's maids-of-honour to pray for Bajaumont's speedy recovery, telling them, with a merry twinkle in his eye, that should he die he knew that he would be compelled to furnish his former spouse with yet another new residence.

The loves of Marguerite de Valois, as those of her husband, were looked upon with a tolerant eye in the France of her day, but they left their mark in the traditions of the country, and helped to lower the prestige of Royalty in the eyes of the people, who were only too often pitilessly fleeced on account of their rulers' vices and extravagances.

Unlike her husband, Marguerite did not, however, leave behind her a crowd of ennobled illegitimate descendants to prey upon the tillers of the soil, whose Seigneurs they became. In addition to the son whom she bore to the Squire d'Aubiac, she is only known to have had one other natural child. While the son of the unfortunate d'Aubiac was a deaf mute, the fruit of the Queen's adulterous connection with the dashing Harlay de Champvallon became a priest, who was known as the Père Archange. Strange to relate, this intriguing



young man became the Confessor of Henriette d'Entragues, one of the mistresses of Henri de Navarre, and with her joined in a conspiracy which aimed at the life of the King, who had failed to keep a promise he had made to Henriette to marry her if she should bear him a son. Instead of so doing, when his divorce with the mother of Père Archange was confirmed, Henri IV. married Marie de Médicis, while still, however, continuing his relations with the furious Henriette d'Entragues, by whom he had several children. Henriette d'Entragues, petulant little spitfire as she was, did not forgo her revenge, but combined with the Queen, Marie de Médicis, and the Duc d'Epemon in a plot which caused Henri's death by assassination.

## CHAPTER II

### Marie de Médicis

HENRI IV., in spite of all his immoralities, his calculating change of religion in order to hold the throne, his ingratitude to his early Huguenot associates, was a great King. He was, moreover, a King of Humanity, the first Monarch in Europe who really thought about and strove for the happiness of the lower orders. Nor did the gallant Henri de Navarre confine his great thoughts to France alone; at the time of his death he was planning to improve the condition of Europe, which was overrun and devastated by Spanish and Austrian hordes, who everywhere left blackened homesteads in their train.

Philip II. of Spain, who had not been long dead, had had four wives, one of them Mary of England. He had married for the fourth time Anne, the young daughter of the Emperor Maximilian II., an Austrian Prince. This Spanish King had married his son, who became Philip III., to Marguerite of Austria, sister of Ferdinand II., who ascended the Imperial throne in 1619. Austria and Spain were already so closely united by the ties of blood

as to have become practically one and indivisible, and, for the benefit of Europe, it was this powerful combination which Henri de Navarre, plotting with his faithful Minister the Duc de Sully, had resolved to crush. His wife Marie de Médicis, on the other hand, who had three or four young children, had views entirely opposed to those of her husband. These consisted in a desire to bring about a double Spanish marriage by marrying her eldest boy Louis to Anne of Austria, daughter of Philip III. of Spain, and her daughter Elizabeth to the young Prince Philip, Anne's brother, and heir to the Crown.

To prevent this double Spanish marriage Henri IV. may be said practically to have given his life, which he had been frequently warned to be in danger. Knowing that the Queen hated him, and was almost openly unfaithful to him with her braggart of an Italian lover Concino Concini, he was no longer living with her at the time of his assassination, but had retired to the Arsenal with his friend the Duc de Sully, and was there getting all ready for the Spanish war. He had every cause to know that Marie de Médicis aimed at ruling France as its Queen-Regent after his own demise, from the importunate manner in which she had recently insisted upon her own Coronation in great state.

At this ceremony Henri had attended merely as a spectator, with sad forebodings in his heart, which were, alas! for France and Europe, but too

soon to be realised by his murder by Ravailac, when he was out driving with the Duc d'Épernon.

When the gallant and humane King had been removed from the scene, Marie de Médicis, through the prompt action of her bold ally d'Épernon, instantly seized upon the power as Queen-Regent.

She walled up for life in the wall of a dungeon, while merely leaving a hole through which she could be fed, a young lady named Mademoiselle d'Escoman, who had insisted upon warning her that the King was to be killed, of which fact she was already aware. Having then caused the unhappy tool Ravailac to be killed with unheard-of tortures, Marie carried out her plan of the double Spanish marriage, while ruling merrily with her handsome lover Concini, now Maréchal d'Ancre, whom she made almost King.

Henriette d'Entragues, Marquise de Verneuil, had retired meanwhile to her country seat, and, in addition to carrying on amourettes with the Duc Henri de Guise and his brother, the Prince de Joinville, both of whom she sought in vain to marry, she there indulged herself in the pleasures of the table. Although Henriette never lost the vivacity and talent for witty, spiteful speeches which used to delight Henri IV., especially when indulged in at the expense of the Queen, the Marquise de Verneuil was careful during the remainder of her career never to say a word against the now powerful Queen-Regent.

While she continued to lead a life of unmolested luxury and ease, Nemesis was in time to descend upon the head of the other woman, who, if not Henri's actual murderess, could, if she had chosen, have saved her husband, the hero of Arques, Ivry, and a hundred other battles, from the pains of death under the assassin's knife. While spending with Concini the millions that Henri de Navarre and Sully had amassed to be expended for the good of the State, the Italian woman altogether neglected her eldest boy, Louis XIII., whom she confided to the care of the Duc de Luynes. This Luynes was the Master of the Horse of the boy-Prince, who, almost a child, took no interest in the budding charms of Anne of Austria, the Spanish wife who had been forced upon him. With Luynes, who was a past-master in the art of hawking and all kinds of manly exercises, the youth passed his time. While his education in other ways was purposely neglected, Louis soon became an adept at every description of sport. He was a saturnine boy of Italian appearance and somewhat sulky in manner, being popularly supposed to be, not the son of Henri IV., but of one of the two cousins Orsini whom Marie de Médicis had brought with her from Florence to France. The Queen's predilections were entirely in favour of her younger and sprightlier son Gaston, Duc d'Orléans, a boy who was credited with having Concini for father. To such an extent was this partiality manifest, that

with a view to the longer continuing of her regency, Marie de Médicis was suspected of an intention of getting rid of her elder boy altogether.

When the young King had been deprived of his Guards by his mother, the lad readily believed in his own danger. Louis, therefore, gave his assent to those few bold spirits around him who offered to make an attempt to remove Concini in order to preserve his own life. It was a dangerous plan which was undertaken by Louis de Vitry, the young officer in command of the Guards which, by the Queen's orders, had been removed from the Louvre, where the young King lived. This was to kill the Maréchal d'Ancre, as he came surrounded by a numerous retinue to visit Louis XIII. Should it fail, it seemed more than probable that the boy-King and all around him would lose their own lives. The plot almost failed, owing to Vitry having missed Concini in the midst of his retinue. When, however, the universally hated Italian had been shot by Vitry's associates, a Corsican noble named d'Ornano lifted the boy-King, who was short for his sixteen years, up to a window, in order that he might express his approval of the deed to the people without the Louvre.

The people of all classes immediately declared themselves for Louis XIII. While Marie de Médicis was deprived of her guards and placed under close arrest, the body of the Maréchal d'Ancre was burned and his heart roasted and eaten. In



her fear for herself, Marie de Médicis refused to protect Concini's wife, Leonora Galigai, the Queen's foster-sister and confidante, whom she had married to her lover as an excuse for keeping him about her person. Leonora thereupon retired to bed, with the Queen's diamonds and her own hidden beneath her in her mattress. The unfortunate woman was dragged forth, the jewels stolen, and she herself decapitated and her body burned.

The Duc de Luynes was now cock of the walk at the Louvre, as Louis XIII. ruled through him, while, for some years, he absolutely ruled the young King. Luynes, however, used his power with moderation towards the Queen-Mother and the Duc d'Épernon, against whom he stayed all proceedings that were instituted in connection with the death of Henri IV. By this moderation he was the gainer, obtaining the good-will of Spain, whereby he was able to marry his brother to the richest heiress of the day, whose hand he obtained from Isabella, the Spanish Infanta, then with her husband, Archduke Albert, ruling the Low Countries. Luynes himself married a beautiful young lady, who has come down to history as the greatest intriguer and flirt of her day. She was Marie de Rohan, daughter of the Duc de Montbazon; but when Luynes died it was by her subsequent title of Duchesse de Chevreuse that she became justly notorious.

Marie de Médicis was in the meanwhile confined



for a year or two in the Castle of Blois. To this place she asked permission to be accompanied by a young priest of noble birth whom she had made her Almoner. Handsome, capable, and with the instincts of a soldier rather than a churchman, it is said that Armand du Plessis de Richelieu was a serious rival of Concini in the Florentine Queen's affections, although Marie was many years Richelieu's senior. The Duc de Luynes would not, however, allow Richelieu to accompany his Royal mistress, but banished him to Avignon. At length, although of portly dimensions, the Queen escaped through a window and was lowered down the walls of the castle in which she was a prisoner. She took up arms against her son, who, however, defeated her before Angers. A peace was made between mother and son, who agreed to unite their forces for the prosecution of the war already undertaken by Louis and Luynes against the Huguenots.

This war was the result of Spanish and Austrian instigation. The 'Thirty Years' War had just commenced in Europe, and, while over-running the whole of the German States, the policy of Spain and Austria was to keep France employed at home. After the King and the Duc de Luynes had treated the Protestant inhabitants of Béarn, his father, Henri de Navarre's birthplace and Principality, with great atrocity, Fathers Arnoux and Bérulle, the priests about the Royal mother and son, thinking de Luynes too strong, contrived to get the exiled

Richelieu recalled from Avignon as a set-off against the King's favourite. Shortly before his return, Louis and the Duc de Luynes were defeated by the Huguenots at the siege of Montauban, where Luynes died as the result of exposure. Richelieu joined the Council of Ministers and was also accorded the Cardinal's hat, he being then aged thirty-six. So great was his delight upon learning the good news at Lyons, that he danced and capered about the room like a schoolgirl. Although the newly made Cardinal warned those who witnessed his delighted prancings to be careful how they told the story of this ebullition of feeling, it was not possible for it ever to be forgotten against Richelieu in the days of his subsequent greatness.

La Vieuville, a man of great probity and a brave soldier, was the leading Minister who, to please the Queen-Mother and her intimate priests, had contrived to cause Richelieu to be recalled. Before long, however, Richelieu had supplanted Vieuville, while adopting as his own that General's anti-Spanish European policy. Before long the Cardinal was in arms for the subjection of La Rochelle, a small republic of hardy Protestant mariners upon the western coast of France. The siege of La Rochelle occupied Louis XIII. and the Cardinal for two years, and cost France so much that Richelieu's policy was crippled for years after its fall.

## CHAPTER III

### Anne of Austria

THE young Spanish Princess, known as Anne of Austria, the wife of Louis XIII., had in her veins the blood of various nationalities, including Burgundian, Austrian, Portuguese, and English. She was of an ardent temperament, and remarkable for her perfect figure and dazzling complexion. Born for love and merriment, the lively Anne from the first deeply resented the insensibility shown to her charms by her young and saturnine husband. She felt it an insult that for the first three or four years after marriage she should be treated as though she were no wife at all, while Louis devoted himself to his hawks and his hounds as though for him no woman existed in the world. Anne found a very genial companion in the wife of Luynes, and afterwards of the Prince de Joinville, the Duchesse de Chevreuse, a vicious young woman who, herself resolved to enjoy life to the fullest extent, found no difficulty in persuading the neglected Spanish Princess that she would do well to follow her example. The Duchesse was the confi-

dante of the young Queen in various intrigues, and she moreover instructed her how to retain her youthful graces by avoiding maternity. Philip IV. of Spain, as also his Imperial Austrian relations, would gladly have welcomed the arrival of a son and heir to his sister the Queen of France, but great was the disappointment of Spain as year after year passed by while, owing to the malpractices of the Duchesse de Chevreuse, whenever there seemed any prospect of that heir a budding life was destroyed.

As, owing to the coldness of his temperament, any child, if born, would probably not have owned the young King as father, Louis XIII. would seem to have troubled himself but little about the matter, and meanwhile Anne of Austria pursued her way as an unprincipled flirt, regarding her own honour as little as that of her husband.

Among those with whom she was on unduly intimate terms was Gaston, Duc d'Orléans, the King's younger brother, but as time progressed it became evident that behind the intimacy of Anne and Gaston was a deep-laid scheme by which, the King having been got rid of, Gaston should marry his sister-in-law and himself ascend the throne.

The greatest opponent to these evil designs, to which Marie de Médicis, the Queen-Mother, was by no means a stranger, was the King's right arm, the Cardinal de Richelieu. Himself by no means insensible to the charms of Anne, by whom he was



CATHERINE DE MÉDICIS

School of Vasari : Palazzo Vecchio, Florence

Photo by Brogi





for years disregarded and flouted, Armand du Plessis was, however, constantly on the watch to thwart the plans of the two Queens, which, as became known, included his own assassination.

The time was to come later when Anne, utterly discredited, would throw herself at the Cardinal's feet, and offer him the love which he then would reject with scorn. In the meantime, powerful as he might be in the State, Richelieu could not prevent the love affairs in which, with the connivance of "*la Chevreuse*," Anne was wont to indulge.

The most remarkable of these early escapades was her affair with that prodigal spendthrift, George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, the favourite of James I. of England, and of his son and successor, Charles I.

James had been persuaded by Buckingham to allow him to take his son Charles, then Prince of Wales, with him to Madrid, with a view to marrying him to the Spanish Infanta. There Buckingham's own love affair with the wife of Olivares, the principal Minister, was chiefly the cause of the rupture of the negotiations. When Buckingham's amorous designs were foiled, by the disguised maid of Madame Olivares being sent to keep a love tryst with him in place of her mistress, he became enraged, and hurried the Prince of Wales out of Spain and back to England.

Richelieu now increased the jealousy already existent between Spain and France by proposing

Henriette Maria, the sister of Louis XIII., to James I. for his son. To negotiate this match, which was concluded in the year 1625, after Charles I. had become King, Buckingham came to Paris. He was the acme of frivolous ostentation, his handsome person blazing with jewels and gold. To describe George Villiers accurately, we need but quote Sir John Eliot's famous attack upon him : "He has broken those nerves and sinews of our land, the stores and treasures of the King. There needs no search for it. It is too visible. His profuse expenses, his superfluous feasts, his magnificent buildings, his riots, his excesses, what are they but the visible evidences of an express exhausting of the State, a chronicle of the immensity of his waste of the revenues of the Crown ?"

Such was the magnificent gallant who came to Paris to woo on behalf of his master, and who, once present in all his ostentatious glory at the Court of France, was soon employed in doing some love-making on his own account. For it was not now merely the wife of the principal Spanish Minister at whom he aimed. George Villiers flew at higher game, and, the better to humiliate Spain, which he now hated, and to increase his own vanitous glory, a Spanish Infanta, the Queen of France, was marked down by the gay lord for his quarry.

Nor, while the handsome gallant dazzled the French Court with his prodigalities, his sowing of the ball-room floors with the pearls that he purposely

let fall from his clothing, did George Villiers find opposition to his designs. On the contrary, Anne of Austria, who had fallen passionately in love with the Duke of Buckingham at first sight, did all in her power to hasten the moment when she should be able to throw herself with all her charms into the arms of the brilliant English noble.

Nor, aided as she was by the intriguing faculties of the Duchesse de Chevreuse, was the imprudent Queen to find the difficulties to the satisfaction of her passion, great as they were, impossible to overcome. The meetings of the lovers are said to have been arranged by the Duchesse in a convent, and popular rumour, years later, concerning the celebrated prisoner, the Man in the Iron Mask, had it that he was the elder brother of Louis XIV., being the fruit of the amours of Anne of Austria and the prodigal Duke, who was to die by the hand of the assassin Felton at Portsmouth.

Whether rumour lied upon this point or no, Louis could but become aware of his wife's escapade with Buckingham. He was in a way to profit by it, however. For subsequently, when England went to war with France to assist the Protestants defending La Rochelle, Buckingham, who kept up a correspondence with his beloved Queen Anne, intentionally behaved in such an effete manner with the English fleet under his command as to render no assistance at all to the Rochellais. For his adored Royal mistress had begged him in her letters

to injure the cause of Louis XIII. and France as little as possible, and how could the Duke refuse to listen to the prayers of a beautiful, if imprudent Queen who had honoured him with so much distinction?

After Richelieu returned to the Court as the triumphant victor of La Rochelle, he found the two Queens, with Gaston d'Orléans, banded against him to injure him with the King and procure his fall. He, however, retained the upper hand by personally insisting that he would resign his great charges and leave Louis XIII. to his fate, since he appeared to listen to his enemies. The King then sided with his Minister and implored him not to desert him, whereupon the Queen-Mother and Anne of Austria trembled in the presence of the man at whose ruin they had aimed.

A conspiracy for the murder of Richelieu had been entered into by the two Queens with "Monsieur," that is Gaston d'Orléans, with whom were associated also the Comte de Soissons, a Prince of the Blood-Royal, the Duchesse de Chevreuse, and the Prince de Chalais, a lover of the Duchesse. He was to have been assassinated in his own palace at a dinner-party. This plot the Cardinal also foiled, and, while sending Chalais to the block, he banished the Duchesse de Chevreuse for a time from Paris, while Soissons fled. The Cardinal was soon to be seen stronger than ever; so strong was he that he even ventured to make a successful war upon the

Pope, from whom he wrested the Italian Province of La Valteline, by which bold deed he brought Urban VIII. to his knees before him.

In order to prevent for ever any possibility of a marriage between Gaston d'Orléans and Anne of Austria, he punished the King's brother by forcing him to an union in another direction. Monsieur was ordered to espouse without delay the very rich heiress of the great family of Montpensier. Nor, although the idea of this marriage was entirely distasteful to him, was Gaston in any position to refuse compliance with the Cardinal's orders, given as they were through the King, who went in fear of his life. Upon two occasions now the Cardinal led Louis XIII. to war, through Savoy, against the Emperor in the north of Italy. Although the two Queens had done all in their power previously to damage the French cause by working in the Spanish interests, the combined efforts of the Cardinal and Louis did much to right matters. Both the King and his Minister fought most gallantly at the storming of the pass of Susa in Savoy in wintry weather, but unfortunately, owing to the illness of the former, the French army had to return to France too soon to prevent the terrible storm and sack of Mantua by the Imperialists in 1630.

Louis was now very ill with fever at Lyons for a time. So ill was he that he was unable to keep away from his bedside his wife and his mother,



with both of whom he was thoroughly disgusted, and with whom he was indeed scarcely on speaking terms. To replace the intriguing Duchesse de Chevreuse, Anne had now by her side a more shameless woman still, in the shape of Madame de Fargis, and around the bed of the helpless King this woman was the centre of the raging storm of intrigue. The intrigues of Gaston d'Orléans, who had become a widower, his wife dying in childbirth of a daughter, were now opposed to those of Anne and of the Queen-Mother. While Monsieur sought to succeed his childless brother, Anne sought to become Regent on the King's death ; but Anne, not wishing to be under the tutelage of Marie de Médicis or Gaston, no longer wished to marry this latter. She had in fact been much wounded by his satirical remarks about her various liaisons and miscarriages, and was resolved if possible not to share the power with him when Louis died, even if he became King. Although Anne was not living with the King as his wife, Madame de Fargis had recommended her strongly to become a mother, for were she so she could not be deprived in the dying King's testament of the Regency, nor could Gaston succeed to the Crown. Luck favoured her : she became enceinte and, instead of following the practices of the banished Duchesse de Chevreuse, Anne of Austria changed her tactics and made no secret efforts to cease from being in an interesting condition.



While the King lived, Gaston, warned by Anne, was afraid to set on foot a new plot for the murder of Richelieu. For the Queen told her brother-in-law that she knew for certain that if the Cardinal should be removed the King would have no scruples about sending his brother to the block. Should the King die, as seemed certain, the Spanish Princess and the Queen-Mother were willing to join with Monsieur and to cause Richelieu's assassination. Meanwhile, at Lyons the greatest excitement reigned to know in what manner Louis XIII. should word his will. Should he in it leave the Crown to his brother, and leave out the usual formula, "Except in the case that our very dear spouse should be enceinte," Anne would be lost. She would have no Regency, and Gaston would ascend the throne. The difficulty was how to ensure that the King should insert these customary words in his testament. Here it was that the abandoned Madame de Fargis played her part. Afraid of poison, Louis XIII. would take his food but from one hand, that of his beloved chief valet de chambre, the handsome young de Béringhen. This gentleman slept on the floor in the corridor outside the King's door, and, in order to gain his good graces, careless of who might see her, the graceless Madame de Fargis openly installed herself under the blankets with Béringhen.

The game seemed now won for Anne of Austria, since in his condition of extreme weakness

Louis XIII. would make his testament in any form that his favourite might dictate. Monsieur was in despair, especially as Béringhen told the King that Gaston and his partisans were only waiting at Lyons to see him die. The young Queen was, on the other hand, triumphant, when, suddenly, the crisis ended in an entirely unsuspected manner. An abscess of which the King's physicians had no knowledge suddenly burst, and Louis XIII. commenced rapidly to regain his strength.

The Cardinal de Richelieu, who had known his danger and all that went on, now amused himself by daily sending satirical messages to Anne of Austria to inquire about her health. He did not have to send for long, however, for when it became evident that the King would live, the Queen closed the episode of this disgraceful intrigue of Lyons by procuring a miscarriage. For while banishing "la Fargis," Richelieu allowed Anne to recall la Chevreuse to her aid.

Richelieu, now secure once more, set about making preparations for a continuance of the war, and sent off three Maréchals de France at the head of the forces, while waiting to follow himself with the King.

He was, however, thwarted by the two Queens, acting through the Capuchin Father Joseph, up to this time the intimate friend and tool of the Cardinal. Having won this monk over by the promise of

obtaining for him a Cardinal's hat, acting on the secret instructions of the two Queens, Father Joseph with a colleague signed a peace on the part of France with the Emperor at Ratisbon, one entirely to the advantage of the Spanish party and most prejudicial to Venice, the ally of France.

It was a handsome but debauched young man named Julius Mazarino, known later as Cardinal Mazarin, who personally intervened upon the field of battle between the Cardinal's forces and the enemy to proclaim the truce. The French forces seemed certain to win the day, when, on October 26, 1630, Mazarino appeared waving a white flag in front of the opposing armies, to rob the French Maréchals d'Effiat and Schomberg of what seemed to be about to result in a glorious victory for France.

The principal reason of the two Queens in thus thwarting the Cardinal's policy was that they had obtained from Louis XIII. a promise that he would dismiss Richelieu as soon as, peace being concluded, he should have no longer need for his services. Louis did not, however, keep his word with his mother and wife. The peace was ratified by him, but he retained the Cardinal upon the famous "Day of Dupes" in November 1630, when Richelieu recaptured the King from the Queens and remained triumphant. The Cardinal was even more triumphant a short time later, when he discovered damning proofs of a conspiracy to put the

King to death. In addition to the two Queens, Monsieur, and many persons of high rank, Madame de Fargis was implicated in this plot, the papers concerning which were all secured by Richelieu. Marie de Médicis was now requested to take herself off to some foreign country, Gaston fled to Spanish territory, while, out of politeness to Anne of Austria, who confessed her own share in the infamous business, the Cardinal allowed Madame de Fargis to escape likewise. He took a red-handed revenge, however, upon many others concerned, dealing out sentences of death or to the galleys in all directions.

A little later Gaston d'Orléans, having risen in rebellion, invaded France with a Spanish army, being aided by the most popular great noble in France, Henri de Montmorency, who was Governor of Languedoc, where he ruled like a King. This force the Cardinal defeated, Montmorency was captured, while Antoine de Bourbon, an illegitimate son of Henri IV. by Jacqueline de Bueil, and thus the half-brother of Louis XIII., perished in a gallant charge. Having by a stroke of diplomacy cut Monsieur off from a relieving force before he could retire, the Cardinal now had the King's brother at his mercy. To save his own head, Gaston was obliged to abandon all of his confederates without reserve to Richelieu's tender mercies. The result of this action was that, to the dismay of all the nobles in France, to the dismay also of the Queens

and of Spain, the Duc de Montmorency was beheaded with many of his gentlemen. It was in vain that the King was appealed to for mercy—he knew Montmorency to have been one of the lovers of the fickle Anne, and, like his great Minister, considered that the time had come for vengeance.

## CHAPTER IV

### Anne and the King's Young Ladies

FEELING gay and debonnair at the successful crushing of so many of his foes, who were also those of the State, in the year 1632 the fancy of Armand du Plessis du Richelieu lightly turned to thoughts of love. In this year he became a Duc as well as Cardinal, and how could the object of his affections venture to disregard the gentle advances of the great and terrible Cardinal-Duc, who had now just shown himself to be all-powerful? This fair object, Queen Anne to wit, was left at Bordeaux by the King with Richelieu after the executions in the south. The King, seeing with a sardonic amusement that his now frightened wife appeared to be by no means unwilling to play Juliet to Richelieu's Romeo, went off to Paris, and left her alone in the Cardinal's hands. For a time Anne bestowed her smiles freely upon the man whom she had sought to kill, but they were merely interested smiles and no more than skin deep. This became evident when, just as Richelieu was about to conduct Anne to La Rochelle, to entertain her on a grand scale



there, he became suddenly dangerously ill, with a painful affection of the bladder. Then, laughing gaily, Anne, who was now thirty-two years of age and more charming than ever, left to his fate the great Minister, of whom she had seemed to be on the point of making a lover. She went off to La Rochelle with the Court, to enjoy herself there at the fêtes that had been prepared for her, while indulging herself freely in a new flirtation with the Marquis de Châteauneuf, a young noble to whom the Cardinal had shown great favour.

The great Cardinal-Duc, lying on his bed of sickness, while moreover galled by the presence of his hated enemy the Duc d'Épernon, now suffered tortures worse than those of illness, the pangs of jealousy. When Anne sent back her confidential valet Laporte to see how near death he might be, we find Richelieu plaintively inquiring of this messenger "if Monsieur de Châteauneuf remained with the Queen late of nights."

Like the King at Lyons, however, the tough Cardinal-Duc soon surprised his disconcerted foes by recovering from the complaint which they had hoped would kill him. He followed the King to Paris and took his seat firmly in the saddle once more.

During this and the following years Anne was continually thrusting in her husband's way, while hoping that he would make a mistress of her, a charmingly naïve and ruddy-haired maiden, one

whom she was coaching to assume the rôle of rival to Richelieu with the King. The rosy-cheeked, plump girl of fifteen, who, from the warmth of her colouring, was nicknamed "The Aurora," was a Mademoiselle de Hautefort. The dilettante Louis fell in love with her in a sense, but, to the disgust of the immoral Queen, merely as a little playfellow. While making of the young Aurora his daily companion, while indulging his æsthetic Italian nature for her benefit by painting little pictures and writing little songs for her amusement, the King absolutely refused to make a paramour of his playfellow.

In order to stir the blood in her husband's lethargic veins, one day when Mademoiselle de Hautefort in a game of romps was hiding from the King a letter in her bosom, Anne intervened. She seized the Aurora's arms from behind, and told Louis to thrust his hand into the maiden's low-cut corsage and take the letter. Louis saw the trick and smiled. He was not going to run the risk of disturbing his platonic friendship with the girl by touching her ivory-white skin. He took out the letter, however, but did so with a little pair of silver tongs!

Those silver tongs doubtless saved the situation for the Minister, while the Queen, in despair, saw herself foiled once more. As, although maintaining a purely virtuous connection with the sprightly de Hautefort, the King commenced to tell her too many of his State secrets, the time came when the

Cardinal thought fit to put a stop to this innocent relationship between Louis and Anne's too well instructed favourite, who was working far too cleverly in the Spanish interests. He told the King that he must drop her, that she was too dangerous, while saying that he would provide for him another young female friend who would be more to be relied upon.

This young lady was the antithesis of the Aurora, an ardent brunette with the gay light of love glancing in her dark flashing eyes. Richelieu was sure of Mademoiselle de Lafayette. She was the relation of his spy Father Joseph, whom he had forgiven for his past trickeries and trucklings to the Spanish party. Now it was that, for the first time in his life, the cold-blooded Louis succumbed to the influences of passion. The blood commenced to run faster in his veins, and soon after his acquaintance had commenced with Mademoiselle de Lafayette he declared his love for her.

Seizing her hand and drawing her to him, the King told the coquettish damsel that he found her essential to his happiness, and asked her "if she would be everything to him."

"Am not I yours, Sire, to do what you choose with?" replied the not over-coy young brunette, for, like Mademoiselle de Hautefort, she had been well schooled in her part.

Her joy, however, soon changed to horrible anxiety when she found that the King's intentions

were strictly honourable. For the virtuous Louis informed Mademoiselle de Lafayette that, worn out by the Queen's constant infidelities, he proposed to divorce Anne of Austria and make of her his Queen. The young girl now was terrified at the fear of assassination at the instance of the Queen or of her brother Philip IV. of Spain. Notwithstanding her fears, Louis proceeded to show his inamorata that he was very much in earnest, by sending off Monsieur de Créqui to the Pope to demand a divorce from his worthless spouse.

Great was now the fear of Spain! The King of that country literally threw himself at Richelieu's feet to implore him to prevent the disgrace of his sister's repudiation. The matter was not, however, settled by Philip's abject embassies, but by the girl whom the King had honoured with his virtuous love. Afraid of a sudden death before she could ascend the throne, Mademoiselle de Lafayette fled to the Carmelite Convent of the Visitation, and took the veil. Here the King during the remainder of his life was wont to visit her frequently, for hours at a time, for having once loved, Louis remained faithful.

In the year 1637 the ever-restless Anne was discovered by the Cardinal in yet another plot, and this time there seemed as if there could be no forgiveness; still, she determined to try the effect of her blandishments upon the man who had sought her love five years earlier. While Richelieu was showing



MARGUERITE DE VALOIS





to Anne her correspondence, by which her guilt stood clearly revealed, she sought to cajole him. "Oh! Monsieur le Cardinal, how good and kind you are to me, and always have been. Only help me out of this foolish trouble in which I have so thoughtlessly involved myself, and, in any way that you may desire, I will prove my gratitude to you." Richelieu was, however, no longer the lover of 1632. He gently put the Queen away from him, and, telling her that she had now gone too far, took the guilty correspondence to the King. He had indeed been good and kind to her upon many occasions, even for her sake sparing her trusty confidant, the valet Laporte, from the torture, when Anne had abandoned him with all his secrets unreservedly into the Cardinal's hands.

Even now Richelieu forgave the Queen. Not so Louis, however. He compelled Anne to write out a detailed account of her conspiracies and then refused to hold any more communication with her.

Finding herself now in terrible disgrace at the Court, while few save Mademoiselle de Hautefort and the soft-hearted nun Lafayette would speak to her, Anne resolved upon desperate measures.

Making a lover of the romantic de Comminges, the nephew of Guitaut, the captain of her Guards, she soon seemed likely to become a mother. A plot was instantly arranged with Mademoiselle de Lafayette, one by which, after Louis had been with that young lady late on a wintry night, no other

apartment was found available for the King to occupy save that of the Queen. Louis was compelled to share her couch with Anne, and subsequently, notwithstanding the fact that he heard of her sufferings with the blankest insensibility, when, on September 5, 1638, she brought a Dauphin into the world the Queen declared the King to be the father of her son and heir.

This son, who was to become the "Grand Monarque," Louis XIV., was born after twenty-two years of childless wedlock. Anne was triumphant indeed, her position was secured, there could be no more talk now of sending her away. The historic congratulations of the Cardinal whose nose had so effectually been put out of joint are amusing to recall. "Ah! Madame," exclaimed Richelieu while by her bedside felicitating Anne of Austria, "there are some joys that are too great for words." And then the Cardinal turned away, for State business required his immediate attention elsewhere, not under the mocking eyes of his enemies.

Shortly after this event the handsome Julius Mazarino came to France as Papal Nuncio, when the Cardinal, seeing the young man's ability, took him under his protection and commenced to instruct him in the art of policy. Through Mazarin's means Richelieu hoped to win the ear of the Pope, in order to induce the Pontiff to force the enormously rich Church in France to contribute some of its

vast wealth to the State, to aid in the continuance of the Spanish and Austrian war.

The Pope, who was in the Spanish interests, refused to intervene, in spite of which fact Louis, by the Cardinal's advice, boldly forced the French Church to contribute an amount of three million *livres*. Mazarin now hurriedly returned from Rome, where Richelieu had sent him, and placed himself unreservedly in the Cardinal's hands as his pupil. Thereupon the Minister resolved to play him off against the again uncertain Father Joseph, for whom the Queens were still endeavouring to win a Cardinal's hat by making use of the King's influence. These hopes of Joseph Richelieu frustrated, while working instead to gain the crimson hat for his protégé Mazarin.

The hat was to arrive in due course for the unscrupulous Mazarin, but, while expecting its arrival, Richelieu had some tricky business for the Italian to perform. This was nothing less than to make ardent love to Anne of Austria. He was to employ the surest means to win the Queen, namely, to flatter her vanity, declare that her arms, hands, and eyes were the most beautiful in the world, that never had there yet been seen such a paragon of beauty. For now that a Dauphin had been born, Richelieu felt that he had much to fear from the next lover the Queen might select, and therefore craftily determined that he should be one devoted to his own interests.

Having personally taken Mazarin to the still

coquettish Queen, the Cardinal playfully pointed out to her that she had better observe him well, for in appearance he was remarkably like the Duke of Buckingham. His hint acted like a charm. Anne saw the resemblance and gave herself unreservedly to Richelieu's handsome Italian protégé. In due course the Queen brought a second son into the world, one of whose Italian nature there was never any doubt. He was Philippe, Duc d'Orléans, and this ancestor of Louis Philippe was born in the end of September 1640.

Notwithstanding the fact that the Cardinal had successfully supplied Anne of Austria with a favourite of his own choosing, he was never to be for long left unmolested by the cabals of the women, and soon, headed as usual by the Queen, a new and very serious plot in the Spanish and Imperial interests was set on foot against the State. Directed entirely by feminine influences, this might well have been called the Conspiracy of the Women.

Aimed entirely at the policy of the Cardinal-Duc, these women, however, called their seditious action a Conspiracy of Peace. Marie de Médicis recruited Catholic adherents to the plot in England, while in France and on the borders the strings were pulled by the young Duchesses de Bouillon and de Lorraine, Mademoiselle de Hautefort, and the Duchesse de Chevreuse.

These ladies succeeded in bringing about an

invasion of France by the Comte de Soissons at the head of seven thousand Imperial troops, and these defeated the force that the Cardinal sent against them under de Châtillon. In the moment of victory, the Comte de Soissons fell, however, shot dead from behind. As the Cardinal had recently sent off one of his clever myrmidons on a secret mission well provided with money, there is no doubt but that he, better than any one, knew in what manner this rebellious Prince of the Blood came to his end.

As the Spanish troops that the Conspiracy of Women had provided for did not arrive to help the Austrians, Richelieu had no difficulty in repelling the invasion after it had lost its leader. He thus maintained his power, and in the following year, 1641, crushed yet one more plot headed by Monsieur and aimed against his life. Upon this occasion, advised by Mazarin, the Queen herself turned informer, whereupon Gaston owned his guilt, and many gentlemen, including Cinq Mars, the King's young favourite, lost their heads.



## CHAPTER V

### Anne and the Duchesse de Longueville

MARIE DE MÉDICIS, the Queen-Mother, after visiting various Courts, including that of her son-in-law, Charles I., had sadly realised that she was nowhere welcome. She nevertheless continued her ceaseless plottings against her son and his great Minister, while gradually getting poorer all the time. At length, almost without resources, this unscrupulous Florentine woman died at the house of Rubens, the painter, at Cologne, in July 1642. The Cardinal and King Louis XIII. were themselves both in poor health at the time of her death, which was a cause of much satisfaction to Richelieu, in whose side his once protectress had for many years been a perpetual thorn. He did not long live, however, to profit by the removal of one of the most important of his enemies. At the end of the same year the Cardinal passed away, in the odour of sanctity, while declaring to the priest who urged him to forgive his enemies that he had "never had any save those of the State."

Armand du Plessis de Richelieu, in dying, left a



political testament to Louis XIII., instructing the King to keep as his intimate counsellors Mazarin, the Prince de Condé, father of the Duc d'Enghien, who had married Mademoiselle de Brézé, the Cardinal's niece; the Comte de Chavigny, the Cardinal's supposed son by Madame de Bouthillier; and also, this young man's reputed father, Bouthillier.

Louis followed his dead Minister's instructions, until, six months later, feeling himself to be dying in turn, he arranged for a Council of Regency to rule the kingdom during the minority of his five-year-old son, who was to become Louis XIV.

This Council included Anne of Austria; it was headed by Gaston, and the other members were the four whom Richelieu had imposed upon Louis XIII. as mentioned above. These the dying King vainly imagined would be able to curb the ambitions of the vivacious Anne of Austria. No sooner had Louis passed away, however, upon May 14, 1643, than, owing to the timorous nature of Gaston and the resignation of the Prince de Condé, Anne found herself able to shake herself free from all control.

Of her lover Mazarin, to whom, although a Cardinal, she is said before long to have been secretly married with a Papal dispensation, Anne did not at first make her main support. She turned, on the other hand, to a very gay and ambitious young spark of Royal blood. This was the Duc de Beaufort, a grandson of Henri IV. and the famous

Gabrielle d'Estrées, Beaufort's father, who had been legitimatised, being the Duc de Vendôme.

Notwithstanding her forty-two summers, Anne of Austria was still exuberant and youthful in her feelings. That she accordingly allowed all kinds of liberties to be taken by the handsome grandson of the amorous King, Henri de Navarre, gave rise to no surprise.

When, however, Anne had confided her child, Louis XIV., to the care of de Beaufort, the insolence of this young Prince at once gave rise to a great deal of irritation at the Court, where he would scarcely allow any one but himself to approach the Queen. The insulting manner in which he behaved to a family so near the throne as that of Condé gave especial dissatisfaction. The Queen, however, was determined to back up Beaufort, and listened with amusement when he laid bare to her the secret irregularities of a young lady who was acknowledged as one of the greatest beauties in France. This lady, who, oddly enough, posed as a prude, was the Duchesse de Longueville, daughter of Condé and sister of the youthful Duc d'Enghien, who had recently been given by Cardinal Richelieu an important command for the continuance of the Thirty Years' War.

There is but little doubt that had he played his cards well the Duc de Beaufort might have ruled the State. He would but have had to continue to flatter Anne of Austria, and represent her as being

his sole divinity, and all would have gone well with him.

Unfortunately, the grandson of Henri IV. vastly preferred the less mature charms of a very noble, haughty, and beautiful lady, one, moreover, possessed of a very jealous nature. When the Queen knew that the Duchesse de Montbazon was the mistress of de Beaufort, she ceased to look upon him with so much affection. It was doubtless Madame de Montbazon's jealousy of Madame de Longueville which caused her lover to show the Queen a couple of very highly spiced and incriminating letters which the daughter of the Condés had written to Léon de Chavigny. An accident saved Madame de Longueville and her family from disgrace. Her brother, the youthful Louis d'Enghien, soon to be known as "le Grand Condé," had two great Captains with him who knew far more about war and tactics than himself. These two, Gassion and Sirot, had lately been the pupils in warfare of the great Swede, Gustavus Adolphus. Owing to their aid, notably the obstinacy of Sirot in refusing to advance with the reserve until he saw that the proper moment had come, d'Enghien won a great victory over the Spanish forces at Rocroy, four days after the death of Louis XIII. When the tidings of the defeat of those two noble Spanish Generals, Don Francisco de Mello and the Comte de Fontaine, reached Paris, the star of the Condés was immediately in the ascendant. It was now

impossible for the Queen, however much her sympathies might have been with the enemies of France while Richelieu lived, to do otherwise than now declare her satisfaction at the success of the French arms.

The subtle Cardinal Mazarin also, who had been lying low, instantly declared himself in favour of the Condés, and by so doing floated into power on the back of the Duc d'Enghien's success. Instead of procuring her rival's downfall, the Duchesse de Montbazou was now ordered to apologise to Madame de Longueville, while the short reign of the arrogant Duc de Beaufort was at an end, he being disgraced.

While the people of France now shouted "Huzza for the Duc d'Enghien!" Cardinal Mazarin commenced to reap the benefits of the young man's success, as the Queen's principal Minister. That the Queen, who loved so many, loved Mazarin passionately is proved by her letters to him. While the nobility, however, resented the arrogance of a Beaufort, both they and those of lower orders in the State far more resented Mazarin, if merely for the fact that he was an Italian and could not speak the French language correctly. The way in which this crafty foreigner mouthed the French tongue was, indeed, the cause of constant satire against him. Little cared he, however, so that he could rake in the spoils in the shape of the riches of the realm, and, with the aid of Fouquet, his wily Minister of Finance, this is what he commenced to do.

In the meantime, to strengthen his position by clinging on to the skirts of the Princesse de Condé, Mazarin managed to overthrow the Marquis de Châteauneuf, who it will be remembered once had been very dear to the Queen, supplanting Richelieu in her good graces when he fell sick at Bordeaux in 1632. For thus supplanting him the Cardinal had thrown Châteauneuf into prison, but he now seemed about to come to the fore once more, especially as he was backed by the Duchesse de Chevreuse. The Princesse de Condé, however, had not forgotten that he had been instrumental, with Richelieu, in causing the execution of her brother Henri de Montmorency; she therefore willingly aided Mazarin in causing Anne to throw Châteauneuf overboard.

The Comte Léon de Chavigny, the son of Richelieu, was, so conceived Mazarin, another obstacle in the way of his own firm establishment at the top of the tree. By the close intimacy which he cultivated with la Chevreuse, and her influence with the Queen, Mazarin managed to get rid of Chavigny. For the Duchesse de Chevreuse, who had hated the father, likewise hated the son, in whom the Queen, however, had found a warm partisan.

In this way luck aided Mazarin from the outset, and being a born gambler, if not always an honest one, luck was what he believed in above all. Nor, as his methods of wooing Dame Fortune were



frequently peculiar, did his luck ever desert the Italian for long. If occasionally he seemed for a time to be getting the worst of it in the political contests of the day, he always contrived to keep some winning card up his sleeve, which played at the right moment won him the odd trick and the rubber. After Rocroy, Mazarin's trump card was the Duc d'Enghien, later it was the Grand Condé's rival, that great soldier the Vicomte de Turenne, for he always knew which was the master card to be held for the moment. Nor, as a gambler, did Mazarin fail to acknowledge temporary defeat in the presence of superior strength. By no means courageous, he never displayed his pusillanimity in a more marked manner than when threatened with a big stick by Monsieur de Miossens. "You scoundrel!" shouted Miossens furiously at the Minister on the Pont Neuf, "if you don't keep your word, and instantly make me a Maréchal de France, I'll break every bone in your body."

"Now that is what I call talking!" replied Mazarin, laughing as if at a good joke; and that same evening the angry noble received his patent creating him the Maréchal d'Albret.

We have mentioned above that, such was his hold over her, Cardinal Mazarin was suspected of having actually married Anne of Austria. This would not have been impossible. In that day, and much later, many a gentleman who assumed



the title of Abbé and wore a semi-clerical dress never took holy orders. At the time that we first met Julius Mazarino waving a flag of truce in front of the French army commanded by d'Effiat and Schomberg, he was an Abate or Abbé, and a young officer in the Papal forces. It has, however, never been proved, although he was given a Cardinal's hat, that Mazarin ever took the priestly vows.

For several years, by constantly reinforcing the forces of d'Enghien, now become by his father's death Prince de Condé, Mazarin and the Queen floated comfortably along on the top of the wave. The young Prince, although called *le Grand Condé*, had but the crudest methods of warfare. Cruel, cynical, careless of the lives that he might sacrifice, and at the same time possessing great personal courage, Louis de Condé had no strategy, no tactics. He constantly attacked boldly in front. When he failed once, twice, thrice, by sending more and more men to replace the slain he usually succeeded in forcing the enemy's position in the end, even although he himself might prove the greater loser. Nevertheless, by his brilliant audacity he became the popular hero, and, in order to keep him so, Anne and Mazarin starved the other commanders in the field, notably, Condé's senior, the able Vicomte de Turenne, while annually giving to Condé immense supplies of warlike provisions and men.

After, by profiting by the aid of Turenne with his army of Germans, Condé had won several great victories, the Thirty Years' War came to an end by the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, by which peace France merely maintained the conquests made in Alsace by the Cardinal de Richelieu. Elsewhere than on the Rhine the French arms had not been attended with any great measure of success, even Condé himself having lamentably failed before the fortress-crowned rock of Lerida in Catalonia.

By the time of the peace the grasping exactions of Mazarin and the Queen had resulted in making the very name of the Minister loathed throughout France, which was now a prey to a most terrible condition of starvation. For want of shelter the wretched people buried themselves in the dunghills for warmth, the children died wholesale, while the nuns, leaving their convents, were forced to earn a piece of bread by begging or by immoral methods. The gaiety and extravagance of the Court went on, however, unchecked, until in his greed Mazarin threatened to throw down all of the wretched suburbs built outside the walls of Paris unless their inhabitants paid a tribute of taxes. This had never hitherto been enforced against these poor people; it had, indeed, been an understood thing that buildings outside were untaxed. Now it was that the revolution, or series of revolutions, called "La Fronde" commenced, it being aimed

in its inception against the cruel greed of the Queen's favourite. As for Anne herself, by this time she had become addicted to the pleasures of the table, and when flushed with too much wine proved that she could be guilty of any outrageous or impolitic action

The first to resist the greedy Italian were the *conseillers* of the Parliament, the “men of the robe,” and it was these magistrates who started the name of the Fronde for the series of revolutions within revolutions which from 1648 to 1652 went by that name. The word *fronde* means a sling, and those of the Parliament of Paris boldly averred that one might as well endeavour to stop the naughty street *gamins* of Paris from throwing stones from a sling at the city watchmen as stop themselves from violently protesting against the cruel exactions of the Italian Minister who ruled the Queen. Mazarin commenced to feel himself helpless before the rising storm. Determined to quell the parliamentary opposition, however, Anne of Austria informed him that she had one bold blade who would risk all for her, even venture to arrest old Broussel, the popular First President of the Parliament, and thus put the rebellious “men of the robe” in their proper place.

When Mazarin heard that this bold blade was none other than the handsome and romantic de Comminges, with whom the Queen had been so intimate before the birth of the child Louis XIV.,

he made a wry face, for he did not like de Comminges at all. Anne, however, had her way, and accordingly de Comminges went and tore old Broussel from the arms of his wife and family, in spite of the fact that the President's eldest daughter threw her arms around the neck of the Queen's messenger and begged him to have pity upon them all. The first revolution of the Fronde broke out as Comminges, with whom was the Maréchal la Meilleraie, was taking the prisoner to the Bastille. Notwithstanding that his carriage was broken to pieces with paving stones and he fired upon, de Comminges brought Broussel safely through to the prison, la Meilleraie being, however, compelled to kill several people, including a street porter, in self-defence, as they were fighting their way through the turbulent mob.

By the side of the dying street porter, arrayed in full canonicals, there now appeared opportunely the cleverest] and, as his own barefaced memoirs prove, the most unprincipled rascal who figured in the France of that day.

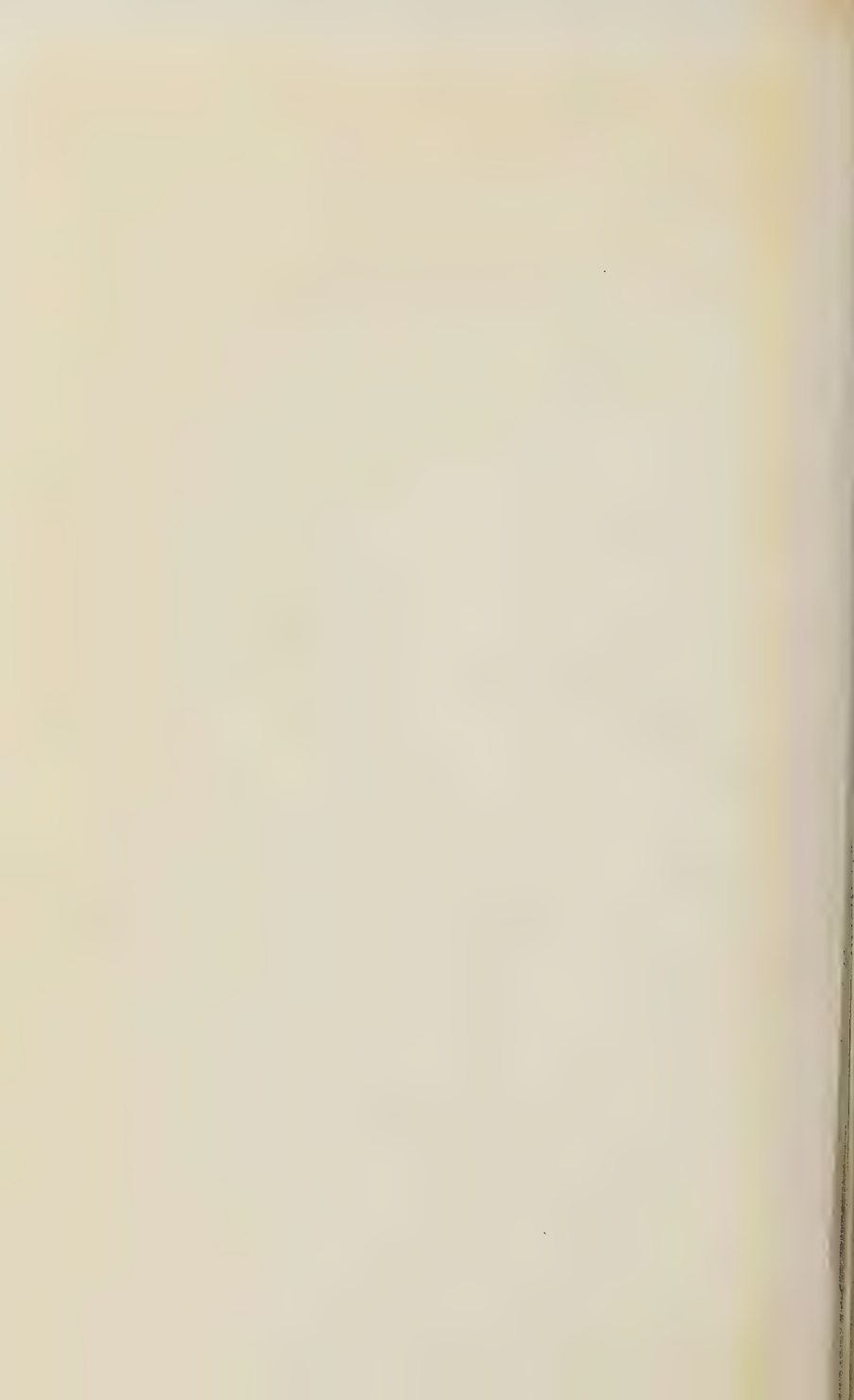
This versatile Mr. Facing-Both-Ways was a young man of Italian descent, De Gondi, or de Retz, the Coadjutor Archbishop of Paris, of which city the real Archbishop was his aged uncle, whom he expected to succeed before long.

In an immoral age, none was more immoral, whether in the ordinary sense of the word or politically, than was the snub-nosed Retz, the man



MARIE DE MÉDICIS

Bronzino: Florence. Photo by Brogi





with the brilliant dancing black eyes whose ardent glances few women could withstand. He was a bold dog moreover, this Retz, and a notable duellist notwithstanding the clerical garb on his back.

The victim of an insatiable ambition, the studied game which he commenced to play while hearing the confession of the porter shot by la Meilleraie was that of becoming the friend of all parties, the darling of the Parliament, of the crowd, and of the Court alike. In the quarrels that ensued between the various parties we find Retz always outwardly figuring as the disinterested friend of one or more at a time. He really aimed, by posing as the universal mediator, to place himself at the top of the tree, and sought now to commence by becoming the Civil Governor of Paris as well as its Coadjutor Archbishop.

From the people in the streets, who implored him to procure the release of their beloved M. Broussel, Retz flew to the Queen, offering her his services as mediator. Anne, however, at first treated Retz with scant courtesy. She snapped her fingers at the Parliament, vowed that she would hang Broussel, while another President of the Parliament named Barillon with five *conseillers* were whipped off in the night to the Alpine frontier fortress of Pignerolo, there to die in freezing mouldy dungeons.

By day the friend of the Court, by night Retz became the friend of the people, whom he stirred up

to further revolt, while they loudly called for him to become the Governor of Paris. The people at once commenced to arm, while one of the mistresses of Retz, the wife of a captain in the town militia, set off with a drum and beat it through the streets. The result of this action was that over a thousand barricades had soon been built and the populace were in possession of the city.

The ecclesiastical "Sergius Catilina" Retz owns in his memoirs that having now fairly started the revolution of the Fronde he was at a loss how to proceed. His principal mistress at this time was, with her mother's knowledge, Mademoiselle de Chevreuse, daughter of the Duchesse; he was also to be found very often at the feet of Condé's beautiful sister, Madame de Longueville. This latter ambitious young lady had a policy. It was to make of her younger brother, the Prince de Conti, head of the State, while disregarding her brother Condé, the friend of Mazarin, who was still absent with his army. Won by her cajoleries, Retz commenced to fall in with the Duchesse de Longueville's plans, the unscrupulous pair imagining that with Condé away they could force the Queen to do as they chose, make her succumb to the popular will and release Broussel. Anne, however, proved violent and pigheaded to a degree. She vowed that she would at once string up Broussel and some others of the Parliament to the window irons of the Louvre, but was restrained from this act of barbarity by

the prayers of Gaston's second wife, the sister of the Duc de Lorraine, and of his famous daughter, Mademoiselle de Montpensier, always known as "la Grande Mademoiselle." It was Anne's sister-in-law, Henriette Maria, the widow of Charles I. of England, who actually dissuaded the Queen from this act of cruelty. She talked about the death in England of Strafford, which pointed allusion to the possible similar fate of Mazarin caused Anne to stop and think.

As a result of her thinking, Broussel was liberated, being sent home in triumph in a Royal coach, when for the time being the Parliament and the people were jubilant, feeling that they had defeated the Queen's lover Mazarin.

Condé, however, returned with his army, and joined with Mazarin, while hoping to despoil his brother Conti of all his great wealth. Whilst, merely to show that his power was not dead, Mazarin now imprisoned Léon de Chavigny, the avaricious Condé was at a loss to know exactly in what manner he could himself reap the greatest advantage out of the general condition of disorder. Advised by the cunning Retz—the universal friend—the young conqueror of Rocroy presently determined that the best game for him to play would be to establish himself as the military dictator of the Kingdom.

Accordingly, after having been repulsed by the honest Broussel, Condé sought the Queen and

declared himself her friend. He then surrounded Paris with his troops and ravaged the environs of the capital as though he were in an enemy's country. Before long we find Anne of Austria at the feet of Retz, she even publicly kissed Mademoiselle de Chevreuse, his *chère amie*, to console her for an insult which had been put upon her, at the instigation of the Condé party. Retz, however, soon deserted both the Queen and Condé, who had become too overbearing, while he and the lovely Madame de Longueville, with the Parliamentary party, occupied the Hôtel de Ville, which they had filled with arms. Anne of Austria fled from Paris with her son, but soon, by a turn of the wheel, the shifty Retz was once more the friend of the Queen and Mazarin. By his advice Mazarin suddenly arrested Condé and his brother Conti, while seeking to imprison Madame de Longueville also. While this young lady now rose in arms in Normandy and then, aided by Turenne and his army, in the west, the young Princesse de Condé also rose in rebellion, with Spanish aid, at Bordeaux. The whole kingdom was soon in an extraordinary state of confusion.

## CHAPTER VI

### La Grande Mademoiselle

WE have described the incidents of the Fronde in detail elsewhere (*Louis XIV. in Court and Camp*); we need not therefore now go into its ramifications, its kaleidoscopic changes. The period is, however, remarkable above all others in the history of France, from the fact of the extraordinary activity of the women. These filled the country with their prancings, their war-like heading of parties and armies. In Paris, we have Madame de Chevreuse and her daughter acting with Retz, the daughter having had for father a member of the House of Guise, namely, Claude de Lorraine, who while he lived was successively known as Prince de Joinville, Duc de Joyeuse, and Duc de Chevreuse. In the capital, with their relative, Monsieur's second wife Marguerite, sister of the Duc de Lorraine, these ladies displayed the most extraordinary activity, first siding with one party and then with another. At the time that the Prince de Condé and his brother the Prince de Conti were imprisoned by Mazarin, despite her besmirched reputation



Mademoiselle de Chevreuse was even clever enough to become the affianced bride of Conti. So great was the power of these intriguing women, that at that moment the Condé family felt that in order to obtain their support no price would be too large to pay. The result of the Chevreuse-Condé alliance was that Mazarin soon found himself in flight from Paris, while the Condé Princes regained their liberty.

The Princesse de Condé, the niece of Richelieu, was another woman whose bold actions were remarkable. She, when only aged twenty-two, put herself at the head of an armed force and opposed Cardinal Mazarin with the Royal army for a time.

The Duchesse de Longueville was constantly in the saddle as a commander, sometimes fighting against the Queen and Mazarin, sometimes with her brother Conti against her brother Condé, sometimes, again, with the Vicomte de Turenne and a force of Spaniards and Germans, sometimes, once more, with her brother Condé with a French and Spanish army. She was, indeed, a regular Amazon Princess, and in one phase of the Fronde her dove-coloured standard might have been seen floating in the breeze against the white Bourbon flag and lilies which betokened the presence of Anne of Austria herself in the field. Eventually, as the series of revolutions pursued their extraordinary course, during which even the Queen



herself changed sides, Condé found himself fighting against his own former lieutenant and his sister de Lougueville's former ally, the Vicomte de Turenne.

Turenne, who was the brother of the great Duc de Bouillon, had, like Condé himself, Royal blood in his veins. Perhaps this was the reason that when Condé had turned decidedly against Mazarin and the Crown, Turenne suddenly declared himself for Mazarin, Anne of Austria, and the boy Louis XIV. Whatever the reason of their mutual changes of front, Condé, when finding himself opposed by Turenne, suddenly gained a most welcome recruit from among the Amazons of the day. This was a young maiden, a Princess and the greatest heiress of her day, Mademoiselle de Montpensier, only daughter of Gaston, Duc d'Orléans, who has come down to history by the soubriquet of “La Grande Mademoiselle.”

“Mademoiselle” was this young lady's official title, just as “Monsieur” was that of her father, it being the prerogative of the eldest unmarried daughter of France, that is, of the spinster nearest to the throne.

This Princess of ambitious views and warlike tastes was eleven years older than her cousin Louis XIV. He, having been born in 1638, was thirteen years old when, in September 1651, Mazarin, then in a semi-voluntary exile, caused him to declare himself of age and competent of ruling the very much troubled State.

In this year the Queen, who had recently in vain tried to induce Retz to consent to the assassination of Condé, procured for this shifty, but by no means murderous, prelate the Cardinal's hat, in order that he might keep himself quiet and no longer interfere on one side or the other. This was a successful move, but while Cardinal de Retz now sank into insignificance, le Grand Condé seemed more determined than ever to rule the State. With his army behind him, he would appear even to have had serious thoughts of seizing upon the Crown.

When that tried old soldier of the Thirty Years' War, Turenne, definitely took up the cudgels on the side opposed to him, the Prince de Condé considered himself lucky indeed that his fair cousin de Montpensier (so named after her mother) mounted her war-horse on his behalf.

Although Mademoiselle, who was a handsome young woman at twenty-four, displayed such virile and war-like tastes, she was by no means averse to the idea of matrimony. Her principal wish in siding with Condé against the Crown would indeed seem to have been that of forcing her young cousin Louis XIV. to make her his Queen. She had already had various other projects of matrimony. One of these was with Charles II. of England when visiting Paris in exile; but she threw him over, because he was too poor, spoke French badly, and did not seem ever likely to win the English throne. Mademoiselle had likewise

proposed herself as wife for the Emperor Ferdinand III., also expressed herself as not unwilling to accept the hand of the Archduke ruling the Low Countries. She had no luck, however, in her matrimonial ventures, and in the end is said to have secretly married her dashing lover, the brilliant Marquis de Lauzun.

Having in the beginning of the year 1652 commenced to pose as a warrior in the cause of the Prince de Condé, Mademoiselle, the better to cause the boy Louis XIV. to regard her with respect, armed her father's town of Orleans, and shut its gates in the face of the King, who was present with his mother's forces. While Mademoiselle de Montpensier headed her bevy of ladies on horseback without the walls of the city, she was then almost instrumental in bringing the civil war to a close by a dashing coup, Condé almost capturing the King as he was retreating before his Amazonian cousin. Mademoiselle then proceeded to Paris, where she, far more than her father Gaston, was recognised by the Parliament and the people as the head of the Fronde.

The Queen being still obliged to roam about France with Mazarin, who had rejoined his Royal mistress from his exile, le Grand Condé followed Mademoiselle to Paris, where, on June 25, 1652, he was guilty of a bloody act of violence. In the course of this outrage he knocked on the head many members of the Parliament, as well as many

others of a mixed crowd of Frondeurs with whom the men of the robe were in violent dispute.

The Memoirs of Mademoiselle and those of Retz are the most interesting of the day, and both have been equally explicit in giving the hidden reasons of the most cold-blooded and calculating events. Concerning this June massacre, Mademoiselle blandly puts it on record that it was considered necessary to terrify the Parliament. It was pre-meditated, the object being to make a desert of the precincts of the Palais de Justice. The Prince de Condé would therefore be able to prevent the vacillating men of the robe from treating with Mazarin and allowing him and the Queen-Mother to re-enter the capital. The amiable Mademoiselle and her father were, however, before long to assist Louis de Condé to the committal of some more terrible and bloody scenes within the walls of Paris.

A day or two after his *coup d'état* of June 25, 1652, the Prince de Condé had encamped with his army of Spaniards a short distance without the walls, when he found himself being attacked by two armies at once, that of the Maréchal la Ferté and that of Turenne. The Vicomte, who had superior numbers to Condé, was driving his old commander in a closely contested hand-to-hand battle back upon Paris, when la Ferté, with a large force, arrived upon his flank. Anne of Austria, the young Louis XIV., and Cardinal Mazarin were meanwhile observing the operations with a guard

of Turenne's troops, intending to enter Paris should the Prince be defeated and the city consent to receive its King.

When getting the worst of it, although fighting most valiantly, Condé summoned the commanders of the *bourgeois* militia holding the city for the Fronde to open the gates to him and his men. To his dismay, the captains at both the gates, Saint-Antoine and Saint-Denis, absolutely refused to admit him. They had not forgotten the events of June 25, and wanted neither Condé nor his army of French, Walloons from the Low Countries, and Spaniards within the city.

The battle was raging under the walls, the air was thick with smoke, some of Turenne's cannon shots were actually falling within the town, when Mademoiselle, in an agony, rushed to the Hôtel de Ville and begged the Maréchal de l'Hospital and the Provost of the Merchants to admit Condé.

"Do you not see," she implored, "that the Prince is being cut to pieces? Open the gates to him! Can you see a Prince of the Blood massacred at your very doors?"

The answers of these chiefs of the Frondeurs was a blank refusal.

Mademoiselle contrived, however, in her wild energy, to enlist the sympathies of the mob in the Place de Grève without, and soon these were yelling furiously that if the Prince were not admitted they would drown "those Mazarins" in the Hôtel de



Ville. The bold Mademoiselle thereupon wrested from the now terrified leaders the permission for Condé and his troops to enter. She also obtained some troops, and with them marched to one of the gates, where she assisted at the entry of convoys of dead and wounded men of the Prince's forces.

She conveyed the wounded to a house near the Bastille, and set to work to have their wounds dressed. In her absence, however, the militia captains of the guards on the gates refused permission to Condé's men to enter. Suddenly she met the Prince himself, he having been allowed to pass in alone. In his hand was a drawn sword dripping with blood, his face was black from gunpowder, his clothes cut to ribbons.

Sobbing with rage, he declared to his brave cousin that he was about to return without to fight to the last and fall with his men, but informed her that unless the gates were opened they must all be massacred, their enemies were innumerable. Thereupon La Grande Mademoiselle vowed that she would save him, and rushing with Condé to the Porte Saint-Antoine, appealed to the officer holding that entrance with such furious determination that he opened the gate, whereupon part of Condé's small army commenced to pour in. Rushing now in turn to the Porte Saint-Denis, Mademoiselle de Montpensier found the battle still raging fiercely without on that side. The militia captain there, however, refused to be moved, and would not open. Some



partisan of Mademoiselle thereupon blew out his brains with a pistol, when his frightened men flung open the gates to admit Condé's exhausted followers, many of whom were bleeding from several wounds.

The gates were shut in the face of the two armies pursuing, but, confidently expecting that Paris would open to them, the Queen and Mazarin, with whom was Louis XIV., soon caused a combined advance of the two armies upon the walls. There was reason for their hopes, for upon re-entering Paris Condé found there three distinct Frondes, each with its own peculiar views. One faction was that of the original Frondeurs, opposed entirely to the former Government and now favouring Condé and La Grande Mademoiselle ; a second was an Orléanist Fronde, all for making Monsieur Gaston supreme, quite apart from his daughter or the Prince de Condé ; while the third party of Frondeurs consisted of those who, for the sake of the young King, were ready to readmit Anne of Austria, but without Mazarin—the foreign favourite—who ground the last farthing out of the poor.

Mademoiselle cried loudly, however, to all alike that Mazarin, the traitor, would surely be admitted if the Royal forces were permitted to enter Paris. She dashed to the Bastille, and by her prayers compelled young Broussel, the President's son, with Miron and Charton, the commanders of its defenders, to lower the drawbridge and admit her. Once

within, she took command, and turning the guns so as to fire over the city walls, opened a fire upon the Royal armies. At the third shot, these fell back. For Anne had had her answer from Mademoiselle—Paris would not receive her and her Mazarin!

Merely a few days after the retreat of the Royal armies, Gaston d'Orléans and the Prince de Condé, finding their position within the city shaky, determined upon a massacre of those of all parties alike whom they had summoned to a meeting at the Hôtel de Ville.

The two Princes themselves attended this meeting, but finding, as they had expected, that the general opinion was to receive the Queen-Mother and the King, but without Mazarin, they left in a rage. The houses surrounding the Hôtel de Ville had already been loopholed and filled by Condé with his disguised soldiers. He also had many partisans among the crowd. Upon leaving, the Prince gave the signal for the firing to begin, when a bloody conflict commenced. Those within the Hôtel de Ville had been warned in advance, and protected themselves bravely with the aid of a company of Archers, which was at last cut to pieces. The carnage during the fighting was terrible, and while it continued those of the various parties besieged in the Hôtel de Ville sent messenger upon messenger to Gaston, to implore him to stop the slaughter. Monsieur, however, remained softly whistling, and would do nothing, while Condé also said, humor-

ously, that he "felt a veritable coward and really could not interfere."

When the Hôtel de Ville was burning fiercely, Mademoiselle said at last that she would stop it all. Picking her way through the dead and dying, she went to the burning building, leaning on the arm of the Duc de Beaufort. There she rescued the Provost of the Merchants. There were also numerous others who escaped the carnage, but all of these had been compelled to promise large ransoms for their lives.

## CHAPTER VII

### Marie Mancini

ANNE MARIE LOUISE D'ORLÉANS, that is to say La Grande Mademoiselle, was obliged to absent herself from the Court for five years after, in October 1652, Turenne brought Louis XIV. back to Paris, and so terminated the Fronde in the capital. The disturbances connected with this rebellion did not, however, end in the provinces, for, in company with invading armies of Spaniards, which he occasionally commanded, Condé remained in arms, and constantly fighting against Turenne, until 1659.

When Mademoiselle was permitted to return to the Court in 1657, she found matters very different from what they had been before the Fronde. As for her marrying her cousin the King, now a young man of nearly twenty, she had killed all of her chances in that direction by her cannon shots from the Bastille.

During the intervening years Cardinal Mazarin, whatever the exact nature of his relations with Anne of Austria, had maintained the most complete supremacy over her, the Queen being afraid to open



HORTENSE MANCINI





her mouth to contradict him. At the same time he ruled the young King, whom for long he kept in a position of subservience, even keeping him short of clothes and pocket-money.

Meanwhile, in order to support himself among the nobility in France, Mazarin had imported from Italy a whole bevy of handsome nieces. These, who ranged from eight to fifteen years of age upon their arrival, he proposed to marry to the great nobles of France, and his immediate efforts to marry one of them to the Duc de Candale, heir to the Duc d'Épernon, was the cause of renewed warfare in Guyenne, where the d'Épernon family was detested. This match, however, was never concluded, and the niece in question, the lovely Hortense de Mancini, married some years later the son of the Maréchal de la Meilleraie, who was made Duc de Mazarin. After marriage her career was by no means an edifying one, for Hortense loved and was beloved of many, including Charles II. of England, from whom she received a large pension, which was continued by his successors James II. and William of Orange. Of the nieces of Mazarin, five of the girls were Mancini and two Martinozzi. The Martinozzi maidens were Anna Maria and Laura, the former of whom married the Prince de Conti, who had jilted Mademoiselle de Chevreuse, and the second Alfonso d'Este, heir to the reigning Duke of Modena.

The Mancini sisters were Laura, Olympia, Maria

(called in France Marie), Hortense, and Maria Anna. Of these, despite the furious opposition of the Prince de Condé, Laura was the first to be married, during the Fronde, to the Duc de Mercœur, elder brother of the Duc de Beaufort and grandson of Henri IV. and Gabrielle d'Estrées. Upon flying to Brühl near Cologne, in 1651, Mazarin caused his nieces to follow him, to avoid their being torn to pieces by the people, who hated him. Mercœur, however, had fallen in love with Laura, who would indeed seem to have been charming. He therefore followed the Cardinal to Brühl, and there married the young girl, in spite of Condé. Upon re-marrying her later in Paris, the Duc received the enormous dowry for Laura of 600,000 livres from the Cardinal and 100,000 livres from the King. She became the mother of the celebrated Maréchal de France, Louis Joseph, Duc de Vendôme, but died in child-birth of her third child in 1657, only ten days before the marriage of her next sister, who by no means possessed her good qualities. This was Olympia, who was the same age as the King, with whom she had been allowed to associate intimately for several years in a manner by no means calculated to improve the morals of either.

When Olympia espoused the young Eugène de Savoie, Comte de Soissons, a Prince of the House of Bourbon and Savoy, she could not have made a greater match in France, indeed scarcely in Europe. Olympia Mancini became at once en-

titled to the honours of a Princess of the Blood, and that more legitimately than had her poor sister Laura as Duchesse de Mercœur. The nieces of the Cardinal had, however, been used to being received with Royal honours in every respect from the moment of their arrival in France, to which country they came by instalments, the greatest nobles and ladies being sent to receive them, while the cannon in every city they passed through on their journeys thundered out a salute as to the King himself. Yet, although the Mancini and Martinozzi claimed after arrival in France to be on their fathers' sides of noble descent, there is nothing to show that they, any more than their uncle the Cardinal, came of anything but decent middle-class Italian families.

The Cardinal's sister, Madame Mancini, commenced to call herself Madame de Mancini from the time that she arrived, and the various nieces, and also the nephews, of whom there were three, assumed the "de," the distinction of nobility, before their names.

When Olympia had been duly married the jealous ladies of the Court expressed the pious wish that now, at all events, the nineteen-year-old bride would learn to behave herself. To behave herself was a lesson never learned by the spiteful and intriguing Comtesse de Soissons, and, while her good-humoured husband raised no objection, the King's coach might from the moment of her union

have been seen daily stationed for hours at the door of his former playmate.

As regards the looks of Olympia, she would appear, from what Mademoiselle and others say about her, to have been handsome and well built, but by no means so pleasing in appearance as the remaining six of the nieces. She had, in fact, a disagreeable manner and a biting tongue; when she chose to speak, that is, for often she would not deign to reply even to the Queen, or to the complimentary and polite speeches made to her by Mademoiselle. This studied insolence made "Madame la Comtesse," which was Olympia's official title, most unpopular.

It was ambition, not real love, that ruled Olympia from the first in the passion that she had simulated for the boy-King, and this ambition became tempered with a spiteful jealousy when, not long after her marriage, she noticed that the youthful Louis XIV. was gradually becoming attached to her younger and more modest sister Marie. Marie was then the eldest of three Mancini sisters remaining unmarried, the other two being Hortense and Anna Maria, this latter a clever child fond of writing verses, who at an early age married Turenne's nephew, the Duc de Bouillon.

Of all her daughters Madame de Mancini did not like Marie, whom she continually sought to snub and leave in the background. When summoned from Italy she had even endeavoured to

leave her young daughter Marie behind, but the girl had a will of her own, and, knowing that her uncle the Cardinal had expressed a distinct wish for her presence, had insisted upon accompanying her mother to the French Court. Once there her mother's studied neglect threw Marie back upon herself, with the result that she went in for solitary literary studies, becoming by far the best educated of all the Cardinal's nieces. Proud and wilful by nature, Marie had also many sweet and generous traits, while, above all, she differed highly from Olympia and some of her other sisters in being naturally pure and virtuous.

Young as he was, Louis had already proved, by his random attentions to various great ladies, and a gardener's daughter, by whom he had a daughter who subsequently married a noble, that virtue was by no means his forte. As soon as he began really to know Marie Mancini, however, he was forced to realise that with her he could venture upon no step likely to damage her reputation. He had already experienced rebuffs from two young ladies who had been warned by the Queen to be careful how they listened to her son's flatteries; but although no embargo was placed by the Queen or the Cardinal upon the King's continual meetings with Marie, who lived in the same palace as himself, the boy only learned to love her purely.

Marie, although two years the King's junior, was sorry for him. She regretted to see him so



ignorant of all that he ought to know, and constantly wasting his time in the foolish and extravagant entertainments called *ballets*, in which Louis was fond of posturing and dancing, while dressed up as some god or hero of antiquity.

Marie, who had hitherto been deprived by her ill-natured mother of the opportunity of attending these frequent festivities, being young, did not by any means despise them when, by her mother's death in 1656, she had gained her liberty. But considering that a King should learn to be a King as well as how to dance, when once they had become intimate the young girl took Louis in a sense under her protection, commenced to read to him aloud, and to instruct him in poetry, prose, and philosophy.

It was while visiting Madame Mancini during her fatal illness that Louis first began to meet Marie. Although her mother had ordered the girl to avoid the Prince, whose lax conduct with Olympia was only too well known, Louis and Marie seem to have constantly met in the corridors and ante-chambers whilst the youth was on his way to or returning from the apartments of Madame Mancini. There is no doubt but that Marie waylaid him, for from the first she fell in love with the King. Moreover, her life had been very dull, while that of even her younger sisters Hortense and the child Anna Maria had been quite gay. Soon she worshipped the very ground he trod upon.



As for Louis, gazing into those black eyes and listening to the musical ring of Marie's magic voice, he soon lost his heart completely, was madly, passionately, delightfully, even faithfully in love. For long, under the very eyes of Anne of Austria and the Cardinal, this love idyll went on unchecked, nor was the love of the lovers hopeless, for, notwithstanding the undoubted difficulties in the way, Louis vowed to the young girl that he would certainly make her his Queen. Marie, on her part, assured him that, devotedly as she worshipped him, notwithstanding the freedom of the period, by no other means could she ever become his; that therefore if for political reasons he was provided with any other wife, he must think of her no more.

Meanwhile, as Marie Mancini was becoming ever more openly the Queen's favourite, and of course that of the fickle courtiers, who worshipped the rising sun, Olympia commenced to rage, for the King's coach stood now but seldom at the doors of the Hôtel de Soissons. She complained to the Cardinal of her Royal lover's growing indifference, while adding some spiteful innuendos concerning the nature of the King's connection with her sister Marie.

From her uncle, however, Olympia received scant attention; he had no fears for Marie's virtue, for he well knew her discretion. Moreover, it is quite probable that at that time Mazarin's ambition went so far as to think of allowing his niece to become

Queen of France, although policy, and some say the wishes of Anne of Austria, caused him before long to change his mind. For, far-seeing as he was, the Cardinal came to realise that his position was more secure as the lover of the Queen-Mother than it would be as the mere uncle of the Queen-Regnant, that moreover, while through the former he reigned supreme over the King, it might be reckoned as almost a certainty that his clever niece Marie would be the one to rule the King should he ever marry her.

Mazarin still, however, did not, for a time, oppose the King's passion, but told Louis what Olympia had said, with the result that the King now commenced to treat Madame la Comtesse with a studied indifference in public which she found most galling. He further ceased altogether to see her in private. At length, however, there came a crisis to complicate matters. The Spanish war dragged on interminably and both countries wanted peace. There would, however, Spain realised, be great difficulties as to the way in which Condé would be treated by Mazarin and Anne of Austria upon peace being declared, for there seemed but little likelihood of the confiscated possessions of that rebel Prince being restored to him.

As a pledge of peace, as Anne's brother, Philip IV. of Spain, well knew, that Queen would dearly like to obtain his daughter Maria Theresa of Austria for her cousin Louis XIV. But Philip was not anxious

to offer this daughter for various reasons, one of which was that he feared that France might some day lay claim through her to the succession of Spain. Philip's only son, by his second wife, the Austrian Maria, was a sickly boy who became Carlos II., and, as a matter of fact, when Carlos died in 1700 Louis XIV. actually took possession of the Spanish throne for his grandson, who became Philip V.

As Philip IV. had fears which the event justified, he held back therefore from offering either his daughter's hand or terms of peace to his sister for her son, and during this time that son continued to enjoy the blissful hours with Marie Mancini, whose side he scarcely ever quitted, morning, afternoon, or night.

At length, while the French arms under the Prince de Conti had suffered very severely in Catalonia, Spain seemed likely to lose the whole of the Low Countries to the ever-successful Turenne. Both countries therefore had much to gain by a speedy cessation of hostilities. Now it was that something happened to precipitate matters.

Whereas the first wife of Philip IV. of Spain, and mother of the Infanta Maria Theresa, had been Élizabeth, a daughter of Henri IV., another daughter of the gallant Henri de Navarre was Christine, who was Duchess-Regent in Savoy. This French Princess had a grown-up son, Charles Emanuel II., but she herself held the reins of power so long as she lived. She had also several daughters, and at this juncture offered one of them, named Margherita,

to her nephew Louis XIV., as the price of the assistance of her forces against Spain.

Mazarin determined that, at all events, a pretence of accepting this offer should be made, secretly hoping that, through jealousy, Philip IV. would offer his own daughter rather than allow the Savoyard combination to take effect. The whole Court moved therefore to Lyons, to meet Christine and her family, in order that Louis XIV. might see what he thought of the charms of Margherita. The Cardinal reckoned, however, upon the mutual love of Louis and Marie Mancini being sufficiently strong to prevent any marriage with Savoy actually taking place before Spain should, as he calculated, interpose.

Everything turned out as the astute Mazarin had calculated. Louis and the Cardinal's niece Marie drove or rode side by side all the way to Lyons, and then, just as the fair Margherita had been accepted by Louis XIV. as a possible bride, an ambassador arrived at Lyons from Philip IV., offering his daughter. Thereupon the Duchess of Savoy and her family were dismissed with Christine in tears, which were, however, appeased with the most costly presents, and then the Court left Lyons, Louis XIV. and Marie Mancini riding side by side again back to Paris.

After this event Louis formally demanded Marie's hand of the Cardinal, while vowing that he wanted neither a peace nor the Spanish Infanta—nothing in fact but Mazarin's niece!

A terrible struggle, which lasted for months, now took place between the Cardinal, with Anne of Austria, and the King. During this the unhappy Marie, whose heart was torn to ribbons, was sent by her uncle in exile to La Rochelle, notwithstanding which the King contrived to see her once more. In the end the Cardinal triumphed.

The Peace of the Pyrenees was signed with Spain, Condé received his possessions back again, and Louis XIV. was compelled to marry Maria Theresa.

Disgusted at her lover's broken faith, and especially at his coldness, caused by Olympia's misrepresentations, Marie now left France and married in Italy. Lorenzo Colonna, Prince of Palliano, Grand Constable of Naples, became her husband.

## CHAPTER VIII

### Henriette d'Orléans ("Madame")

BEFORE leaving for Italy, Marie Mancini had been married by proxy to the Constable Colonna in Paris. The high-spirited girl had also had an explanation with the faithless young King. In this she revealed clearly to Louis how, merely for his own benefit, she had sacrificed herself to her uncle in refusing to answer his letters after their last meeting. Marie likewise informed Louis plainly how all the stories told to him by her sister Olympia about the passion she was supposed to have entertained for Prince Charles de Lorraine had been false. Yet Marie freely admitted that she would rather have married that young Prince, to remain in France, than have accepted the very rich and princely suitor in Italy who had been imposed upon her by Cardinal Mazarin before his recent death in March 1661.

After this conversation, and hearing the reproaches, which were well merited, of the woman who loved him so tenderly upon the subject of his recent haughty coldness towards her, Louis



was in despair. Vainly, however, he now begged Marie to remain in France, there to accept either the Prince de Lorraine or some other suitor whom the King might find for her hand. The King's prayers could not, however, change the decision of the virtuous girl, who was not inclined, according to the too prevalent fashion of the day, to accept a husband who would be merely a dummy in order that she might be able to share the passion of the King who should have been her husband.

The parting of Louis XIV. and Marie was sad. While he complained bitterly that the destiny of Kings was not in their own hands, she was sobbing as though her heart was broken when, after the King had kissed her hand for the last time, she was driven away in the midst of a hundred brilliant cavaliers.

Her sister Olympia, meanwhile, as the price of her treacherous representations, to which she had been urged by Mazarin, had been highly rewarded. While the King had, until the moment of his explanation with Marie, resumed his old relations with the insinuating Olympia, the Cardinal had purchased for her, for 250,000 livres, from the lady holding the office, the post of Superintendent of the Queen's Household.

When Marie had left the Court to commence a married life which was to prove full of vicissitudes, her sister, the Comtesse de Soissons, calculated that not only would she be able to continue her girlish

intimacy with Louis XIV., but, by his favour, rise to a degree of splendour which might equal if not eclipse the grandeur of the young Queen Maria Theresa. To eclipse the Queen a far less amount of brains than was possessed by any of the Cardinal's nieces was required. For Maria Theresa was lumpish and uneducated, could hardly be called passably good-looking, could not talk French, and made herself ridiculous with her absurd Spanish notions on the subject of etiquette.

One redeeming quality she had, but it only bored the King: this was that she loved him, nor ever cast her eyes upon any one else. From the first Louis looked upon her with an indifference which he did not take the trouble to conceal, and during the whole of his reign, which lasted for thirty-two years after Maria Theresa's death, openly gave to one woman after another the position which should by rights have been that of his Queen.

The hopes of Olympia might, therefore, have been justified, had not her treachery been revealed to Louis in that last interview with her ill-treated sister, the heart-broken Marie. And now, with Marie departed, another young woman, one with equally brilliant attainments, was flashing upon the Court of Paris, to the complete extinguishing of the light of the Comtesse de Soissons.

Monsieur, that is to say Gaston d'Orléans, had died recently, and Philippe, the King's younger brother, a most effeminate Prince, now replaced

him, being known by the titles of Monsieur and Duc d'Orléans.

Philippe, who was twenty-one years old, had all the tastes of a girl. He had worn girlish clothing until his fourteenth year, and now was never so happy as when discussing the last style of female fashions or dressings for the hair. Notwithstanding that he had surrounded himself by a group of dissolute young nobles, of whose affections he was as jealous as though they had been women, Philippe, who was his brother's butt, was compelled to take a wife. She was Henrietta, the seventeen-year-old daughter of Charles I. of England and Henriette-Maria, who had been for long an exile at the French Court. The Princess Henrietta, called in France Henriette, had from childhood been educated in a Parisian convent, one endowed by the English Dowager-Queen, of which the Abbess was Mademoiselle Louise de Lafayette, formerly beloved by Louis XIII.

Under her care and that of a Père Cyprien de Gamaches, the English Princess had received a brilliant education, so much so that when in March 1661 she married her cousin, the Duc d'Orléans, Henriette was universally acknowledged to be the most accomplished young lady of her day.

It was in May 1661, when the marriage by proxy of Marie Mancini to the Constable Colonna was being celebrated in the chapel at the Louvre, that "Madame," as the young Princess was called, first

attracted public attention and admiration. After the melancholy departure of the Principessa di Palliano to join her husband in Naples, the tender heart of Louis XIV., longing for a sympathy that could never be expected from Olympia, was laid bare to his newly married cousin and sister-in-law, who readily exerted her utmost endeavours to console its owner.

Henriette happened to be feeling in need of consolation herself, for this bride of two months had already found matrimony a delusion. She was scarcely a bride in aught but name, as, with the exception of taking an interest in the methods in which her ladies of honour did their hair, Philippe d'Orléans considered it a pure waste of time to leave his male associates to occupy himself with his wife's affairs. Thus it was almost, if not quite, to a virgin heart that Louis addressed himself; he found it, at all events, one very ready to respond to his own when once he had commenced to recognise the remarkable attractions of his sister-in-law. Henriette, at Saint-Cloud, was already weary of the merely female society of La Grande Mademoiselle and one or two other women, when she received a letter from Louis, addressed to his "beloved sister," informing her of the dulness of his life at Fontainebleau and of his impatience to see her again. Madame did not require to be asked twice, and the following day she set out for Fontainebleau, where all became merry from the moment of her arrival.

Far from being disturbed on perceiving that his brother the King had fallen in love with his seventeen-year-old wife, the base-minded Philippe d'Orléans was delighted, only seeking to make use of her to obtain for himself a rich appanage and other material advantages which would enable him to be more prodigal with his dissolute *mignons*.

Sprightly, lively, and gay, well-dressed, a perfect dancer, and an excellent musician, well-read also to an unusual degree, Madame proved indeed an attractive companion to Louis XIV. While having been brought up as a strict Catholic by her bigoted mother, unfortunately this young daughter of Charles I. failed in one respect, her moral sense not being at all highly developed.

While various nobles of high degree, including the Duke of Buckingham, son of the former lover of Anne of Austria, were ever at her feet, she would appear never to have loved any of them but the Comte de Guiche, son of the Maréchal de Gramont. He was one of her husband's favourites at the time of her marriage, but Philippe soon became violently jealous of his wife when he found that she had won from Guiche the affections which he himself treasured. What was the exact depth of Henriette's affection for her cousin, Louis XIV., it would be difficult to gauge. Inseparable as they became day and night at Fontainebleau during the hot month of June 1661, when moonlight strolls which lasted until dawn varied the



delights of riding and dancing, when by all kinds of mad pranks Louis contrived to isolate himself in the romantic depths of the forest with his girl cousin, it would have been indeed strange if she had not learned to love him a little too much.

However much she may have conceded to him, the youthful Madame was, however, even at this early period a woman of head quite as much as a woman of heart, and throughout all the glamour of her moonlight revels there was one by whom that heart was never forgotten. For his sake she was willing indeed to exert herself to please to the utmost ; in his interests, far more than her own, the girl was ready to give back love for love, kiss for kiss. The very unworthy person for whom Henriette was always willing to commit herself to any extent, in order that she might gain for him the money of which he stood ever in need, was her brother, Charles II.

He had only a few months earlier been crowned at Westminster, a year after regaining the British throne, and, while being already in correspondence with Louis on matters calculated to line his own pockets, although adverse to the interests of his Kingdom, Charles was perfectly unscrupulous in the methods by which he employed his young sister to do his dirty work for him.

While working for Charles II., Henriette, who could not well do otherwise, also endeavoured to cause her brother to fall in with the views of Louis



XIV. Thus, during that summer month of mad frivolity at Fontainebleau, Madame arranged with Charles that he should accept the hand of the wife whom his cousin of France thought fit to impose upon him. As, however, Louis XIV. offered to Charles a very large sum as dowry with the Portuguese Princess, Catherine of Braganza, Charles was perfectly willing to allow his sister to marry him in accordance with the political views of the young King of France.

When Madame returned to Saint-Cloud after the gay festivity of Fontainebleau, she found that she would be likely in due course to present her husband with an heir, who, the Queen being as yet childless, might also prove to be the heir to the French Crown. This pleasing anticipation was, however, accompanied by an incident which was equally disagreeable to the King and his lively sister-in-law. This was that his mischief-making mother, Anne of Austria, sought to stir up both Queen Maria Theresa and Philippe d'Orléans, to arouse their jealousy on the subject of what Louis and Henriette were pleased to consider as merely their innocent amusement.

The result of this action of the Queen-Mother was to bring to an end the unrestrained intercourse of the giddy cousins, although not at all in the manner in which it had been intended by Anne. In order to hoodwink all whom it might concern, it was agreed between the King and Madame that

in future when he came to see her he should endeavour to make it appear that it was on account of the *beaux yeux* of one of her ladies of honour. Any one of them would do, the essential being merely that she should not be one of the designing or boastful sort, who should imagine more than the King intended and give herself undue airs in consequence. The quietest and most unassuming of Henriette's maids of honour was a charming and well-conducted girl named Louise de la Vallière, and, as a result of the heartless compact entered into by the guilty couple, it was upon this gentle creature that Louis commenced to shower his attentions in a most barefaced manner.

Before long, however, Madame began to regret her immoral suggestion to play with an innocent woman's feelings. For she perceived that Louise had fallen in love with the King, while he, neglecting his sister-in-law, was pursuing the beautiful girl in earnest.

## CHAPTER IX

### La Vallière, Olympía, and Madame

WHILE the now disappointed Madame was getting all the blame from Anne of Austria, from her mother Queen Henriette Maria and the young Queen Maria Theresa, for the assiduity of the King's supposed attentions to her, Louis was doing his utmost to overcome the religious scruples of Louise de la Vallière. Six weeks of ardent love-making and the assistance of various dissolute courtiers were required to break down the young girl's scruples, which were all the greater as she loved her young mistress, whom she strove with all her might not to supplant in the King's good graces.

It was at length in the midst of the most wonderful fêtes ever seen in France, those given to the young King in August 1661, by Fouquet, the Minister of Finance, that Louis obtained his desires, and Louise, incapable of further resistance, became his prey.

Having profited by Fouquet's magnificent hospitality, Louis now for the first time, although not yet twenty-three years of age, showed his despicable nature. For owing to the representations of Colbert,

who had been Mazarin's Intendant and hated Fouquet, Louis determined to disgrace his late host. He was the more determined to do this as some of the courtiers had shown him the picture of a fair-haired young lady in Fouquet's splendid apartments of the Château de Vaux. This they declared to be a picture of Vallière, at the same time assuring the credulous King that the Finance Minister was seeking to win the gentle Louise for himself.

After the fêtes Fouquet, who knew his danger, offered the King a present of a million livres. Louis pocketed the gift, and then signed an order for the imprisonment of the Finance Minister in the mountain fortress of Pignerol for the rest of his life! The unscrupulous, but very able, Colbert now became the principal Minister, and at once started on the task which he continued for twenty-two years, and which made his name execrated, until he was killed by the King's ingratitude. This was that of wringing money for Louis XIV. out of all classes by every means in his power. There was, however, no dirty work to which the King would not put Colbert. For instance, upon the occasion of the birth of Louise de la Vallière's first child, we find Louis compelling his Minister to perform certain duties very nearly akin to those of a nurse!

To return to the relations of Louis with this young lady, Madame soon became tired of her palace being made a place of rendezvous, especially as the King kept up the fiction that he was merely

paying visits to his fair cousin. His sister-in-law at length became angry with Louis, and said to him plainly that La Vallière was now "his girl, not hers," and begged him to take her away from under her roof. Henriette none the less always behaved with a kindness and consideration to Louise which did her honour. The King for a considerable time refused to remove Louise from his sister-in-law's care. Nor did he remain faithful to Louise when she fell into poor health, but made a favourite of a Mademoiselle de la Mothe. This was a young lady whom that Satan in petticoats, Olympia Mancini, threw in his path merely with spiteful intentions, which were to bring about the downfall of La Vallière. It is not indeed to be supposed that the Comtesse de Soissons had, before this, without a struggle accepted the situation with Madame, especially after having been herself able to recapture the King, by the aid of her uncle Mazarin and the employment of numerous falsehoods concerning her sister Marie Mancini. The King was, however, as strong as the Cardinal's niece, yet somewhat fearing Madame la Comtesse, whom he suspected of being likely to stick at nothing, he had devised a plan to keep her quiet at the time that he himself was running after his sister-in-law.

The King's principal favourite among the courtiers was a certain François du Bec-Crepin, a son of Madame de Moret, one of the endless string of favourites of Henri de Navarre. She had married

a Marquis de Vardes, who was the father of François.

Having succeeded to his father's title and estates, there was no noble at the Court who could compete with de Vardes. He was a gallant after the style of the famous Bussy d'Amboise, who, everywhere triumphant, fell eventually in the apartments of the Comtesse de Montsoreau, after killing the Comte and eight or ten of the nineteen assassins whom he had brought with him to avenge his honour. De Vardes, who was the Captain of the Swiss Guard, was ever ready with his sword and the darling of the ladies. Notwithstanding that he had, unlike Bussy, hidden in the cellar for two days instead of openly confronting the jealous Duc de Roquelaure, he had not become ridiculous on that account, as it was understood that his object was merely to preserve the reputation of being immaculate hitherto possessed by the Duchesse de Roquelaure. That de Vardes was not always so scrupulous where the honour of a great lady was concerned we shall see presently—he was in fact a thorough-paced villain, if a seductive one. Recognising this fact, Louis considered him just the man he required, and therefore asked de Vardes to oblige him by leaving his other conquests for a time, in order to exercise his arts upon Olympia de Soissons, so that she might no more trouble herself upon the subject of his own neglect.

De Vardes was delighted to oblige the King,



moreover was not Madame la Comtesse young and beautiful? Hitherto he had wisely not interfered where she was concerned, but having received his Sovereign's command, it became another matter!

The scamp of a Marquis now threw himself at Olympia's feet, and she, thinking to avenge herself upon the King by showing him that she could replace him with such a brilliant cavalier, lent a ready ear to his passionate declarations. Soon, however, the pair, who were well matched in wickedness, had concocted a plot to injure the King, and especially Louise de la Vallière.

Jealousy was at the bottom of the motives of both, or rather it was the motive of Olympia, and the friend of Vardes, the Comte de Guiche, who before becoming a *soupirant* for the favours of Madame, had been repulsed by La Vallière.

De Guiche was associated with them in their cabal, of which there is no doubt that Madame became aware, through this young scamp, before long. Between them the precious trio—Olympia, Vardes, and Guiche—concocted a letter in Spanish, with which language the Comte was perfectly acquainted. As Superintendent of the Queen's Household, the Comtesse de Soissons purloined a letter from the Queen of Spain to Maria Theresa. The handwriting was copied, and the envelope retained to be used for the anonymous letter which the three unprincipled plotters now sent to the Queen. In this letter Maria Theresa was most carefully informed of the

manner in which Louis XIV. was in the habit of passing his time with Louise de la Vallière, of his connection with whom the young Queen had up to the present no suspicion.

As Burns has said, "The best laid schemes of mice and men gang aft agley," and the truth of this adage was evident when Donna Molina, Maria Theresa's Spanish lady of honour, fearing some bad news from the Court at Madrid which might distress her Royal mistress, carried the letter upon its arrival straight to the King—who read it!

It was now Louis XIV. who was distressed, and, wondering who it could be that had played him such a trick, he sent for his crony de Vardes. The Marquis had several enemies about the Court, and although he could say no more than that he suspected these, they were instantly banished by the irate young Monarch, merely on the chance of de Vardes' suspicions being correct.

By the next act in this drama, while the Comte de Guiche was got rid of, the scoundrelly associates, Olympia and the Marquis de Vardes, contrived between them to bring Madame very low in popular estimation.

That Henriette was foolish to a degree there can be no doubt. It must, however, be remembered that she was only eighteen, had no support from a husband of infamous morals, and from childhood had lived in the centre of a dissolute society, of which one of the most dissolute members was the

King, while even her mother-in-law, Anne of Austria, possessed not a scrap of reputation.

The youthful Madame, therefore, doing as the others did about the Court, saw little harm in allowing the great nobles to bombard her pretty ears with ardent protestations of love. To none of these had she listened, however, with more than a passing interest save to the Comte de Guiche. De Vardes, who was himself in love with the attractive Henriette, when told by the King to pay his court to Olympia, was secretly much piqued at this preference for another. Not, however, in the least suspicious of his friend, de Guiche told him all the circumstances of the manner in which Mademoiselle de Montalais was acting as go-between in the matter of his correspondence with Madame. Nor did he disguise from de Vardes the fact that this young waiting-lady had introduced him into the apartment of Madame disguised as a female fortune-teller.

Some vague hints of this event being allowed to filter through from Olympia and de Vardes to the King, Louis attacked Louise de la Vallière on the subject, insisting that she should conceal nothing, but tell everything that she knew. To avoid doing so, Louise ran off and took refuge in a convent. The King, however, drove to the convent after her, and soon thought that he had extracted the truth. This, as Louise related it, did not seem very terrible. The King, however, banished Guiche from the

Kingdom, when he went off to the wars, taking service in the army of the Emperor Leopold I.

When Guiche had left Paris, leaving poor Henriette in a by no means happy frame of mind, Olympia and Vardes, both with the intention of avenging themselves upon Madame for their individual reasons, made up to her, while pretending to sympathise with her in her troubles. Deceived by this friendliness, the young Princess foolishly entrusted de Vardes with a packet of love-letters from Guiche, in which were many sarcastic remarks about the King.

The wretches now had Madame in their power. Vardes, despite his connection with Olympia, was determined, like Olympia herself, to ruin the girl—for Henriette was indeed no more—and the pair began to put on the screw in a subtle way. By informing Louis that Henriette cared for no one but her brother Charles II., the King was set against Madame, whereupon her other friends at the Court deserted her. She herself at the same time was set against the King by being informed that he did not love her in the least, and had never cared for her at all.

It was when the unhappy Princess had been reduced to the point of despair that the Marquis de Vardes played the trump card by which he calculated to get her into his clutches. He threatened to show the packet of her lover de Guiche's love-letters to the King! When she implored him, with

tears in her eyes, to spare her and to give her the letters back again, this profligate rascal of a Marquis informed this daughter of a King that she could have them back again—at a price.

What was the price?—merely that she should come to the house of the Comtesse de Soissons, and there grant him an interview alone!

This price, so we are told by Madame de la Fayette, the confidential historian of Henriette, the frightened Princess agreed to. She went to meet Vardes, she got her letters back, but the Marquis began to hold his head very high indeed, and to boast that he could do anything he liked with Madame. Indeed, he soon proved it to all Paris by sending the Duchesse d'Orléans to keep an appointment with him in the Convent of Chaillot, much used for assignations at this time. When Henriette was there waiting for the Marquis, instead of going to meet her, this “noble gentleman” ran about Paris telling all whom he met, as a good joke, where Madame was to be seen expecting his arrival, but adding that really he was too tired of her to trouble himself about her any more. Olympia and this ruffian had now accomplished their purpose with a vengeance, having completely ruined such reputation as Madame might have had left to her after the open attentions of the King. The Marquis had not, however, done with her yet, but took to Louis a letter which he had received for her from his unsuspecting friend Guiche.



The King and Vardes having seen the letter, the latter took it to Madame, but the young Princess absolutely refused to fall into the trap by receiving it from his dirty hands. In his spiteful rage de Vardes now went too far.

One of the dissolute hangers-on of Henriette's worthless husband was the Chevalier de Lorraine. Hanging on the arm of this young scion of a princely House, the degraded Duc Philippe d'Orléans was in the habit of going about to balls, painted and patched like a woman, while dressed likewise in woman's clothes. When the pair went to the wars together, Monsieur was wont to go into raptures upon the subject of the handsome figure the Chevalier made on horseback, and, further, when his friend was lightly wounded he wept over him like a girl. Sad to relate, it is in connection with this young noble that public scandal in Italy publicly associated the name of Marie Mancini after she had left her faithless husband, whom she had cause to believe had attempted to poison her. Nothing was, however, ever proved to Marie's dishonour.

At the time in Paris of which we are speaking, the Chevalier was employing much of his time in making up to Mademoiselle de Fiennes, a lady of honour of the Duchesse d'Orléans, with whom his liaison was later publicly known. Then it was that the infamous de Vardes remarked contemptuously to the Chevalier, in the hearing of others :

“ Why, in heaven's name, do you waste so much



time about the servant when the mistress is so much easier to win? Go straight for the mistress—you will have no trouble.”

This biting insult Madame could not brook, but went with it straight to the King, when Louis deigned to remember that she was of his own blood, that, moreover, he had loved her. He was, indeed, now commencing to love her again, in spite of the strange action of his mother in openly trying to set up Louise de la Vallière against her daughter-in-law. Louis avenged Henriette by putting Vardes in the Bastille, then, after keeping him in a damp dungeon for eighteen months, banished him to Aigues-Mortes for a period of twenty years.

## CHAPTER X

### Louise de Kéroualle—Madame Poisoned

THERE were several great ladies about the Court of Louis XIV. who, from about the time of the commencement of that Monarch's liaison with La Vallière, played a strange and cruel religious game.

These ladies, who had become *dévotés* with advancing years, made a practice of the abduction of Protestant children, to have them forcibly educated as Catholics. The first of these was the Duchesse d'Aiguillon, a niece of Cardinal Richelieu, concerning whom there had been a long-continued scandal when, as Madame de Combalet, she lived with the great Cardinal, who had created her a Duchesse not long before his death.

The next in importance was the Duchesse de Richelieu, wife of the successor to the title of the Cardinal-Duc, and a third the wife of that Maréchal d'Albret who had threatened Mazarin with the big stick if he did not accord him the bâton of a Marshal of France.

These extra devout *grandes dames* were all ardent followers of the pernicious and foolish tenets of



ANNE OF AUSTRIA  
After a painting by Simon Vouet



Illuminism, which talked of religion in a passionate, dreamy manner, and taught that it mattered not what sins the body committed so that the soul was supposed to have reached the proper pitch of self-effacement. These Illuminists were exceedingly numerous in France, and before his death Cardinal Richelieu, who saw the excessive harm that resulted from the teaching of their doctrines to the nuns by their spiritual directors, had endeavoured, but in vain, to suppress the cult.

A little later the followers of this romantic, passionate form of religion were known as Molinists, and then again as Quietists.

The great ladies whom we have mentioned above, and who were, in the name of charity, in the habit of kidnapping Huguenot children, were all intimate with Anne of Austria, who had also become *dévot*e, and together they formed a very serious cabal at the Court. The influence of this cabal was exercised strongly upon the young King to induce him to slight Madame, and to exalt Louise de la Vallière at the expense of the Duchesse d'Orléans.

To their action was due the fact that, upon the occasion in 1664 of the extravagant fêtes connected with the inauguration of the great works of the Palace of Versailles, Louise and not Madame was made the Queen of the festival. This, too, notwithstanding the fact that the King's pet poet, Molière, whom, for his protection from the nobles

that he satirised, Louis caused to sleep in his own apartment, had written the piece performed on the occasion in honour of Madame. This was *La Princesse d'Élide*, in which the "Princess daughter of Kings" of the play was meant to symbolise Henriette. The action of the cabal, however, resulted in the lady-in-waiting of that King's daughter receiving all the honours instead of Madame.

The cause of the, for at all events a time, successful endeavour to lower Madame was the jealousy of her greatness by the greatest ladies of the Court. There, even after her apotheosis of 1661, she still reigned for several years supreme, arranging all the ceremonies and amusements, much to the disgust of La Grande Mademoiselle among the rest. For while the ceremonious Queen Maria Theresa, who fatigued everybody with her Spanish etiquette, was left in the background, Louis allowed his cousin the brilliant Henriette to act as veritable dictator and leader of all ceremonies, and especially the festivities, which she better than any knew how to lead.

Notwithstanding the cabal, however, the importance of Madame, owing to her sway over her brother Charles II., continued to be recognised by Louis XIV. He was, moreover, dazzled by her cleverness and attainments, and therefore, despite his mother and her clique, turned to his sister-in-law once more. At a time when her



husband had commenced to hate her, owing to her action in showing up to the King the infamous nature of Monsieur's favourite, the Chevalier de Lorraine, the King declared himself openly for Henriette, and raised her up once more. Despite the puerile jealousy of her husband, who was disappointed in not receiving the coveted appanage of Languedoc, and who vowed she should not go without him, Louis sent Madame alone to England on a secret mission to Charles II.

She went in the greatest state, being accompanied by the King and the whole Court to Lille, after which Henriette crossed the Channel from Dunkirk with a suite of several hundred persons. The ostensible object of her journey was to negotiate a treaty of commerce between France and England; but, although not even Colbert was in the secret, and far less the French or English Ambassadors, there was much more behind than which appeared on the surface.

The real objects of Madame's visit to her brother were to bring about the forcible Catholicism of England by Charles, who was to be induced openly to declare himself a Catholic, and to win him to a disgraceful alliance with Louis against Holland. To remain on friendly terms with Holland was the interest of England at the time, nevertheless the gift of two million crowns from Louis was quite sufficient to cause Charles to accede to his sister's demands that, against the interests of

his subjects, he should aid Louis in a war on Holland.

In addition to the money bribe, much to her disgrace Henriette took to her brother one in flesh and blood. This human present from Louis to his cousin of England had taken the shape of a very pretty young Breton lady named Louise de K roualle. This sprightly damsel Louis had obtained "by arrangement" with her family. He gave to her subsequently an estate and a title, that of Duchesse d'Aubign , likewise sent with Louise by the hand of Madame a bond whereby the girl, if accepted by the English King, should be endowed with a considerable sum for every child that she might bear to him.

Charles, who was pleased with the bait, accepted Louise from his sister more readily than she had consented to take her to him. The girl became openly his mistress and was, to the scandal of the English peerage, created Duchess of Portsmouth. She had a son by Charles II., Charles Lennox by name, who when but three years of age was created the first Duke of Richmond. A few years after the birth of this son, "Madame Carwell," as she was called, being detested by all in England, the English Parliament demanded from the King her removal from the Court. Charles, however, contrived to retain Louise de K roualle in England until his death in 1685. Then she was compelled to return to her native shores, nor would William III. subse-

quently permit the reappearance in England of this "present from Louis XIV."

Upon one point Madame Henriette failed in her mission to her brother, for Charles II. declared that for fear of "being sent upon his travels once more" he could not risk as yet openly declaring himself a Catholic. He assured her, however, that he would do so upon the first opportunity, and agreed willingly to give Louis six thousand troops to aid in the despoiling of Holland for the benefit of the King of France.

For a year or two previous to the visit of Henriette to England, her life in the Palais-Royal had been made perfectly miserable by the constant presence of the Chevalier de Lorraine. He was the master of her husband, and, while asserting himself also as master of the Household, lost no opportunity of behaving in an insulting manner to Madame.

The young Princess was nevertheless much attached to her lady of honour, Mademoiselle de Fiennes, with whom for several years Lorraine had been on terms of excessive intimacy. One day he had a violent scene with this girl, and, to wreak his spite upon her, told Monsieur that she must be sent packing at once. Without consulting his wife, Philippe d'Orléans thereupon gave Mademoiselle de Fiennes orders to leave. Madame was now in a quandary indeed. For she was sure that Monsieur, who had become aware of some details of the constant secret negotiations between Charles II. and

Louis XIV., had told them to his worthless favourite Lorraine. She was also convinced that the Chevalier in his absence had written some of these deadly secrets to his paramour, who might make some terrible use of them in revenge for her expulsion from Monsieur's household.

Before her lady of honour left, Madame seized and broke open the casket in which she kept her letters, and found in it, as she had expected, a packet of correspondence most compromising to herself, to Louis XIV., and to Charles II. Of this packet she took possession, nor, in spite of all his endeavours and emissaries, could the Chevalier contrive to repossess himself of the letters.

For Madame had been too clever for Lorraine and her husband, and, while they had just contrived to procure the banishment of her friend Cosnac, Bishop of Valence, Henriette managed to send off the compromising epistles into exile with her crony the Bishop.

It was after this, by acting secretly through her brother Charles, who wrote to Louis to beware of the Chevalier, that Madame got rid of Lorraine.

The King tore his favourite from his brother and sent him off to a dungeon in the south of France. Unfortunately for Madame, Louis, eventually moved by his brother's prayers, released the Chevalier from the Château d'If and allowed him to go in exile into Italy.

When Madame returned from England, laden

with costly presents after her successful mission, the ungrateful Louis, having obtained what he wanted from her, deserted his sister-in-law and allowed Monsieur to bear her away from the Court.

The young Princess was now left in the hands of her enemies, and in June 1670 she became suddenly ill after drinking a glass of chicory water. While the doctors called by Monsieur to attend Madame refused absolutely to give her the emetic she called for, she suffered fearful agony and was soon evidently in a dying condition. The King and Mademoiselle came to see her, and both melted into tears at her pitiable condition. She died after thinking in the most considerate manner of those of her Household, to whom she caused to be distributed six thousand pistoles given her by Charles II. According to Elizabeth Charlotte of Bavaria, the virile Princess who became the second wife of Monsieur, the poison that killed Madame Henriette had been sent from Italy by the Chevalier de Lorraine, and was given to her by d'Effiat, the Captain of her Guards.

## CHAPTER XI

### Athénaïs de Montespan and Louise de la Vallière

ATHÉNAÏS DE TONNEY-CHARENTE, the daughter of the Duc de Mortemart, was a buxom young lady whom Madame had dismissed from her household on account of her intriguing and mischief-making nature. She managed, however, to procure a husband, in the person of the Marquis de Montespan, the grandson of Zamet the rich Moor who had been the rollicking boon companion of Henri IV.

Shortly after her marriage we find Madame de Montespan in attendance upon Queen Maria Theresa, when her onerous duties would seem mainly to have consisted in handing the Queen's chemise, petticoat, and stockings to the first femme de chambre, who in turn presented them to Her Majesty the Queen.

Athénaïs had come to Court with an idea: she wished to become something more than a lady of honour, something to the King. Louis, however, was in love with Louise, now Duchesse de la Vallière, and would have none of her. She



accordingly became one of the Queen's religious cabal, waited her opportunity, and cultivated the friendship of one whom she thought would be useful to her—the dashing Marquis de Lauzun. She missed that gay noble's companionship for a time, when he happened to be a prisoner in the Bastille, but the time would come before long when the King would let Lauzun out again. In the meantime, Athénaïs lost no opportunity of observing to the Queen how dreadful was the conduct of one who could behave after the fashion of the wicked Louise de la Vallière.

“Oh, should the King ever be so misguided as to make any improper propositions to me, not for worlds would I ever forget the duty that I owed to my Royal mistress!” Thus the Marquise became much beloved of the Queen, who recognised her good and faithful qualities, and especially admired her religious zeal.

Athénaïs de Montespan, whose arrogant beauty was of the large and opulent order, was meanwhile much appreciated by many of the nobles of the Court, who compared her to the slighter built and more ethereal La Vallière, much to the disadvantage of the latter. The nature of the charms of the Marquise can be gathered from the contemporary *Chroniques de l'Œil-de-Bœuf*. In this, the author says of her, that “she would be one of the most perfect beauties of the Court if the *ensemble* of her features did not reveal an audacity rather calculated

to provoke desire than to conquer solid affection. The eyes of this lady are fine, but they sparkle with a fire which is more libertine than tender. Her mouth has an extreme freshness, but the smile it displays appears disdainful and mocking."

Such then was Athénaïs when, in May 1667, regardless of all the ties that bound him to Spain, Louis determined to rob his infant brother-in-law, Carlos II., of his Flemish dominions.

The King's duplicity, and the treacherous aid that he had given to Portugal against his father-in-law, Philip IV., had but recently been in a great measure the cause of that Monarch's death in despair. Now Louis was vowing to the Dowager Queen of Spain to give to young Carlos "all the marks of tenderness and friendship in his power," while getting ready an army wherewith to invade the Low Countries.

Having declared war and immediately proceeded into Flanders, with a Royal army commanded by the able Vicomte de Turenne, one place after another had fallen into the hands of the French King. For Flanders was unprepared, her fortresses were all in bad order. Nor was this the fault of Marsin, the distinguished and able French general in command of the Spanish forces. He had recently wished to put all the fortifications in repair, but had been snubbed by Maria, the Spanish Queen-Mother at Madrid, who had told Marsin that to repair the fortresses in the Low Countries would

be an insult to the King of France ; as such a step would seem to infer that Spain suspected Louis XIV. of thinking of an invasion.

After enjoying himself vastly for a time in the easy conquests of this, his first war, Louis imagined that the war would be much more agreeable if the scene of operations were but enlivened by the presence of some of the ladies of the Court, including the Queen, whom he would take with him to invade her young half-brother's territories. He accordingly left the army and returned to French soil, rejoining the Court at Compiègne.

No sooner had the successful Monarch arrived at this place in the pleasant summer weather, than the friend of Athénaïs, the Marquis de Lauzun, as subsequently recorded by Molière in one of his brilliant satirical plays, proceeded to play the part of Mercury to the Jove of Louis XIV.

The result of this servile noble's actions was that, immediately after the Monarch's appearance on the scene, the virtuous Madame de Montespan became all that she had vowed she never would become to the fickle King of France.

Poor Louise de la Vallière had been intentionally left behind by the Queen in Paris, but merely two or three days had elapsed when her loving heart was wrung by the dreadful tidings that the man who had neglected no wile to win her was unfaithful. She learned, moreover, that Louis was about at once to return to the army, taking

with him the woman by whom she had been supplanted.

The love of Louise de la Vallière for the unworthy Louis was the one absorbing passion of her lifetime. Regardless of what the Queen might say, or what the King might say, she resolved to make a bold and determined effort to re-capture her Royal lover. She started from Paris in a coach and four, and, following the King to La Fère, found there only the Queen and some ladies, including Athénaïs. Louis had ridden on to join the army, leaving the Queen, who was as yet unsuspecting of the Marquise, to follow.

Hearing of La Vallière's arrival, Maria Theresa was furious and gave orders that the Duchesse was not to be given any food, although it was night and she had had none all day. Early next morning the Queen ordered her coach to follow the King, while being accompanied by the Marquise. At the same time, Maria Theresa gave orders to her Guards to prevent the Duchesse de la Vallière from leaving La Fère.

"Too late! Madame," was the reply. "Behold the dust yonder in the distance, it is the dust of Madame la Duchesse's coach wheels!"

"Follow! follow at a gallop! overtake her! pass her!" ordered the Queen, and then commenced, in her heavy gilded coach, a pursuit which much resembled that of the pursuit of a runaway pair to Gretna Green.

The loving Louise had, however, a good lead, and she not only kept it but gained greatly upon the following coach. She reached the camp of the army first, and drove at a gallop to the King's tent. Flinging herself out, in a flood of passionate tears Louise threw her arms around the King, while begging him for a little love—a little mercy.

And Louis XIV.—how did he behave? His vanity was greatly pleased that Louise should have dared thus, for his sake, to flout the Queen. He was, he assured Louise, more than charmed to see her and, now that she had come, resolved that she should no more be separated from him during the campaign. When the Queen and the Marquise arrived in the camp in turn, nothing could have been happier than the faces of Louis XIV. and Louise de la Vallière. Although the traces of the recent tears were not yet entirely obliterated, the features of the Duchesse were now radiant with a bright contentment which was, alas! but to prove ephemeral. For in the days that followed, although the King did not give up La Vallière, neither did he give up Athénais de Montespan. During the remainder of that summer campaign in Flanders, the King was constantly to be seen gallantly riding by the side of the great Royal coach, wherein travelled together three distinguished ladies, mockingly termed by the laughing soldiery "*les trois Reines*—the three Queens."



These three Queens, upon whom Louis XIV.—the Sun-God—deigned apparently to bestow his impartial smiles, were Athénaïs de Montespan, Louise de la Vallière and Maria Theresa; we mention them in the order which they now evidently occupied in the King's volatile affections.

While Mercury de Lauzun was now in receipt of the highest honours, becoming Colonel-Général of Dragoons with an immense salary, there was one noble about the Court who was by no means pleased to learn that the Royal Jupiter Louis should have elevated the Marquise de Montespan to such a lofty position on the heights of the French Olympus. This was the Marquis de Montespan, her husband, who differed from the ordinary French noble of the day—some said in the most ridiculous manner—in his ideas on such matters. Upon the return of the Court to Versailles from the Flanders campaign, this injured husband had the bad taste to raise an exceeding outcry—further to play a practical joke, which was considered in very bad taste, upon the King and the whole Court. One day he arrived at the Palace in a richly appointed black mourning coach, with servants in black liveries and clad in deep mourning himself. Even before the Marquis had reached the great antechamber known as l'Œil-de-Bœuf, the King had been informed of this extraordinary apparition of the husband of the new reigning favourite. He had heard also that the Marquis would not reply a word to any



one, to say for whom he was in such sudden and extravagant mourning. The King at last himself questioned the apparently bereaved noble. "For whom are you in such deep mourning, M. le Marquis?"

"I am in mourning for my wife, Sire, whom I have lost!" And bowing low to the astonished Monarch, whom he left looking like a fool in the midst of the courtiers, who did not dare to titter openly, the Marquis de Montespan retired to his funereal equipage.

Nor did the insolence of the grandson of Zamet the Moor end with this incident. For he proceeded to give his faithless wife a slap in the face—but, oh, such a slap in the face as no lady at Versailles, much less no King's favourite, had ever been known to receive before. The poor lady's cheek was all inflamed, so much so that even the ill-used but good-natured Queen was inclined to pity the woman concerning whose piety and rigidly virtuous views she had learned the truth too late. To slap the face which he delighted to caress was an insult which Jupiter Louis could by no means brook. He exiled the Marquis to his country estates, and, the better to complete the poor man's dishonour, insisted at the same time upon openly according him a pension from his Royal bounty. This the injured husband declared that he refused to accept in payment for the wife of whom he had indeed cause to say that he had been robbed, since the King had gone

through the farce of himself declaring a divorce between him and Athénaïs.

While for several years the Marquise de Montespan became the ruling lady at the Court of Versailles, and presented Louis with numerous children, whom he caused to be declared legitimate, Louise de la Vallière did all in her power to humble herself, from a spirit of self-abnegation. She took Athénaïs to live with her in her house, and even went so far as to personally wait upon her rival, to dress her and do her hair.

Time after time Louise retired to a convent, merely to be forced by Louis XIV. to return to the Court, despite all her prayers to be allowed to follow a religious life in expiation of her sins. The selfish King would not, however, give her up altogether, although he knew only too well the agony it was to the naturally pure-hearted woman to be compelled to live a vile life as merely one of "the three Queens." At length, however, Louise, who had given the King three sons and a daughter, was allowed to indulge her perpetual remorse by retiring from the world and its vanities for ever. She entered the Carmelite Convent of St. Jacques at Paris, where she became known as Sister Louise de la Miséricorde. Here she died on June 6th, 1710, all of her children save her daughter, Marie Anne de Bourbon, who was legitimatised as Mademoiselle de Blois, having died during their unhappy mother's lifetime. La Vallière's third son, Louis de



LOUISE DE LA VALLIÈRE



Bourbon, who had been given the old Royal title of Comte de Vermandois, lived to the age of fourteen, but died eight years after his mother became a nun. The other two boys died quite young.

## CHAPTER XII

### Athénaïs, the Widow Scarron, and “la Fontanges”

WE have mentioned earlier, when speaking of Henri IV., the custom of the French Kings of legitimatising the children whom they had by their various mistresses, and who, having thus been granted the privileges of Royalty, became a burden to the State—that is to say, the people. When it is borne in mind that these Royal bastards were often endowed with princely appanages, immense estates and incomes, and that when females they were married with enormous dowries, it becomes evident that the infliction they caused the tax-paying part of the community—which excluded the nobility and the clergy—was grievous in the extreme.

As much money was, moreover, usually expended upon the various ceremonies connected with their baptisms, marriages, and funerals as though they had been born in wedlock. How great must therefore have been the burden upon the wretched people of France in connection with the offspring of Louis XIV. alone!



By his Queen, Maria Theresa, he had six children, three sons and three daughters. He survived them all, but his eldest son Louis, the Dauphin, lived for fifty years, and was the grandfather of Louis XV. By Louise de la Vallière Louis XIV. was presented with four children, and by Madame de Montespan with six. Madame de Maintenon and Mademoiselle de Fontanges were, fortunately for the people, childless, while François de Rohan, Prince de Soubise, was good enough to acknowledge as his own the eleven children that his wife, upon whom the King frequently showered gold in profusion, brought into the world.

One of these, a son who resembled Louis XIV. to a remarkable degree, was the first Cardinal-Prince de Rohan, a name which became subsequently so notorious in connection with the Affair of the Diamond Necklace.

The King's two sons by Madame de Montespan who survived their infancy flourished exceedingly, until the middle of the eighteenth century, in semi-Royal State. They were the Duc du Maine and the Comte de Toulouse. The former married a Princess of the House of Condé, and from their Palace of Sceaux emanated for years the spiteful plots which hampered the rule of the good-natured Regent, the Duc Philippe II. d'Orléans.

Notwithstanding that the Regent had himself married one of the daughters of Louis XIV. by Montespan, he took his revenge by depriving, with

one exception, all of that King's offspring by the Marquise of their Royal condition. The exception was made in favour of the harmless Comte de Toulouse, and for his lifetime alone. The Comte married Marie Victoire de Noailles, the attractive widow of the Duc d'Antin, who was the one legitimate son of the Marquise de Montespan, and consequently the elder half-brother of the Duc du Maine and the Comte de Toulouse. The Comtesse de Toulouse became notorious in the early years of Louis XV. by leading that Prince astray, although she was twenty-two years his senior, and making a pretence of occupying merely a quasi-maternal attitude towards him.

Little good came indeed to France from Madame de Montespan's sons, daughters, or daughter-in-law. Their schemes and irregularities involved the Regent in a war with Spain, an extra cause of expense to be borne by the unfortunate country which was compelled to pay through the nose for their maintenance in luxurious ease.

To return to the Marquise, whom we left after receiving a stinging and well-merited box on the ear from her indignant spouse. Having no more to fear from him in his exile, Athénaïs proceeded to enjoy herself greatly at the Court, where she had become the lady of first importance, and for several years gold trickled through her hands like water. Gaily eating and drinking, she likewise introduced her young brother, the Duc de Vivonne, to the

King, who proceeded to treat him as a brother-in-law. He was a worthless young noble of the most frivolous type, and profligate as Louis himself. To reward Vivonne adequately for his good qualities and gay conversation was, however, for a time out of the King's power. When, however, Messina in Sicily revolted from the Spanish rule, Athénaïs pointed out that her brother would make an admirable Governor of that town, which had offered itself to France. The Spaniards were, she said, too sedate for the Sicilians, now surely no one could accuse Vivonne of sedateness—he would just suit them. Louis agreed with his favourite, and accordingly off went the light-hearted young Duc to Messina, invested with the rank of Viceroy of Sicily. In this island, the irregularities of Vivonne where the ladies were concerned soon had the result of making the Sicilians regret the recently ousted Spaniards. Their regrets went so far that they sent and begged them to return. The news of this event had reached the fiery, ill-tempered War Minister Louvois, who dominated all the King's Ministers, not excepting even Colbert. The result was that when Louvois came to the King to request him to make some *Maréchaux de France*, there was no mention made of a Marshal's bâton for the Duc de Vivonne.

Athénaïs de Montespan was, however, now in such a firm position that she was not at all afraid of Louvois. She was present with the King, and

snatching the list from the War Minister's hands scanned it for a moment. "Where," demanded she imperiously, "is the name of the Duc de Vivonne?" The King laughed, while Louvois, getting redder in the face than ever, stuttered out that he had forgotten it. The Marquise returned him the list and pointed to a pen, when he took the hint and humbly added the name of the haughty favourite's brother.

Thus Vivonne became a Maréchal de France, but he was so lazy that he took several months to write a letter to say thank you to the King for the honour conferred upon him, which lapse of good manners somewhat irritated Louis XIV.

Matters went from bad to worse in Sicily, and eventually a French fleet had to be sent there to aid Vivonne to defend himself against the combined fleets of the Spaniards and Dutch. These latter were commanded by the celebrated Admiral Ruyter, who lost his life early in the battle which took place, in which, in spite of tardy aid given by Vivonne, the French were victorious.

Louis was now annoyed with his "brother-in-law" in earnest; his displeasure even fell upon Athénaïs also. Taking advantage of this fact, the eloquent Bishop Bossuet contrived to induce Louis XIV. to send his favourite away in the year that the King was celebrating a jubilee with many religious ceremonies.

The Queen and the devout ladies of the religious

cabal reckoned that it was chiefly owing to the pious advice of the widow Scarron, the governess of the children of the Marquise, that the King had at last had his eyes opened to the impropriety of his conduct. For the governess had lately been much in the favour of His Majesty, and since she had lost her husband, the Abbé Scarron, a poet and buffoon with a biting tongue, she had openly posed as a lady of prudish instincts. There were some rumours of course—but is not a Court ever a hot-bed of rumours? Therefore were it not as well—so said the ladies of the cabal—to thank the virtuous governess? who was, we may mention, to be known before very long by the title of Marquise de Maintenon, but of this eventuality none had a hint when the good Bishop Bossuet informed the King that he saw no harm in his having just one last interview with Madame de Montespan. That interview was arranged to take place in the presence of the ladies of the Court best known for their piety. In their presence it indeed began, but the King upset all of Bossuet's plans sadly, by terminating the interview elsewhere with the lady, tête-à-tête!

This tête-à-tête was but the prelude to a reconciliation and to the birth of Françoise Marie, the youngest daughter of the Marquise. This girl, like Marie Anne, La Vallière's youngest child, was legitimatised as Mademoiselle de Blois. The Regent Philippe, Duc d'Orléans, who was the son of Monsieur by his second wife Elizabeth Charlotte



of Bavaria, was when still but Duc de Chartres compelled by Louis XIV. to accept Montespan's last-born as his wife. His mother was so angry with him for consenting to the *mésalliance* that, in the long corridor at Versailles, she gave her son a box on the ear which rivalled for severity that administered to his future mother-in-law by her husband.

The second Madame need not have exercised such undue severity, as her son only did as he was compelled. That it was indeed by no means from choice that Philippe married Françoise Marie may be divined from the fact that he never spoke of his wife by any other name than "Madame Satan"!

It was not very long after the birth of Madame Satan that the excellent widow Scarron suddenly became a Marquise, and purchased a magnificent estate named Maintenon! She still, however, remained humble-minded enough to continue her duties as governess of Madame de Montespan's children.

Whether or no Athénaïs had commenced to suspect the pious conversations held with the King by the newly made Marquise, she now took an extraordinary step, one calculated indeed to make Louis fix his attention upon some one less devout and many years younger than her governess. She presented to the King an eighteen-year-old beauty, by name Marie Angélique de Fontanges. This mere child Athénaïs showed off to Louis as though



she were a slave for sale in the slave market. "Look at her!" she exclaimed, as the maiden blushed. "Saw you ever anything so new, so exactly and perfectly beautiful, so well proportioned in every limb and feature, so faultless from head to foot? Hands, eyes, and feet, all are perfect."

Louis looked and agreed to all that the Marquise had said. La Fontanges was certainly new and, moreover, La Montespan was getting rather old. So he packed off the Marquise for the second time, and kept Mademoiselle de Fontanges in her place, while further turning the child into a Duchesse.

While Athénaïs had described Marie Angélique as "a mute idol—a marble statue," she had had no idea what a baby-faced golden-haired maiden could develop into when suddenly transformed into a Duchesse—and, like herself in maturer years—something to the King.

The childish Fontanges, who delighted, while dressed like a boy and with her locks flying, to gallop wildly by Louis' side in the long forest glades, became a perfect little demon at the Court. She made everybody sit up very straight indeed, and found it altogether beneath her to curtsy to the Queen, whose place, and that of Olympia, Madame, Louise, and Athénaïs, she now occupied.

The governess, now a Marquise, however, still remained at the Court, where she had established herself as censor of morals. For her own reasons, she did not think it came quite within her province

to lecture Louis upon his impropriety in preferring this madcap girl to all others—including herself. As a governess, however, she thought it would be becoming to her to tell this chit of a Duchesse that she occupied altogether a false and unbecoming position, and would do wisely to go home to her friends. When the ex-widow Scarron carried out her virtuous intention she caught a Tartar indeed. Laughing scornfully in the face of Madame de Maintenon and looking her up and down, Marie Angélique replied blandly: "What, Madame! do you then think that one quits a King as one lets fall one's *chemise de nuit*?" Madame de Maintenon's subsequent career showed only too plainly that she had no ideas of the kind, and, for the moment, she contented herself by going off without another word, to inform the Queen and the cabal that la Fontanges was simply incorrigible.

During the reign of this girl Louis XIV. broke out into boundless personal extravagance, even going so far as to have sheets of cloth of gold. Her career was, however, but short, for, after helping the King for two years to spend millions of livres, poor little Fontanges died suddenly of a galloping consumption. Her last words were: "I die happy, for with my last glance I have seen my King in tears."

## CHAPTER XIII

### Was Olympia a Poisoner ?

OF all the matches made by the nieces of Cardinal Mazarin, that of Olympia Mancini was the grandest alliance, for by it she became directly connected with the ruling House of Bourbon. Her husband, Prince Eugène de Savoie, Comte de Soissons, was the son of Prince Thomas de Carignano-Savoie. He inherited the title of his uncle, Louis de Bourbon, Comte de Soissons, who had been killed—as it was supposed by Cardinal Richelieu's orders—at the battle of La Marfée during his insurrection of 1641.

Olympia's mother-in-law, sister of this rebellious Prince, was Marie de Bourbon. She was usually known in France as the Princesse de Carignan since she had married a Prince of the reigning Ducal House of Savoy. Olympia, it will be noticed from the above, was after her marriage connected with both the ruling families of France and Savoy, and therefore, seeing how the reigning families had intermarried, with all the Kings and Queens of Europe, not excepting the King of England.

Notwithstanding the grandeur to which this

member of the ordinary family of Mancini had been raised, Louis XIV. treated her with but scant courtesy at the time that the Marquis de Vardes was imprisoned. For he ordered Olympia to leave Paris, to go with her husband into exile, as it was called, to the County of Champagne, of which the Comte de Soissons was Governor.

It speaks for the times, to say that a noble was supposed to be exiled when simply ordered to repair to his post of Government, from which he drew large revenues. Such was, however, the case, and thus the innocent Prince Eugène de Savoie was greatly pitied at being compelled to share the banishment of his ill-regulated wife. He was pitied a great deal more some little time later, for, when about to proceed from Champagne to join the army at the seat of war, the Comte de Soissons died in a mysterious manner. It was then commonly reported that this ever-complaisant husband had been poisoned by his wife. Olympia he left with several children, one of whom became the celebrated Prince Eugène who, in command of the Austrian armies, so greatly helped Marlborough to humble the pride of Louis XIV. and France.

When her husband was dead, the Comtesse de Soissons was, however, allowed to return to the Court, although at the time that he became enamoured of Mademoiselle de Fontanges the King ordered her to sell her place as Superintendent of the Queen's Household to the Marquise

de Montespan. At this time there was an epidemic of poisonings in France. The affair of the Marquise de Brinvilliers, to which we shall presently allude, was just finished, but not so the sudden deaths occurring in all directions.

The principal poisoners and sorceresses were two women named Voisin and Vigoureux, with whom was associated a clever ruffian named Lesage, who, by tricks of conjuring and sleight of hand, contrived to pass himself off as a great magician. These horrible creatures were visited by all the great ladies of the land, to whom they either sold their poisons or promised to poison for them any rival or inconvenient husband whom they wished to be removed.

Nor were ladies the only clients of the infamous poisoners, for even that heartless and cold-blooded General, the Duc de Luxembourg, was one of the nobles who was openly accused of having had recourse to the arts of la Voisin. Nothing is more likely than the guilt of the commander who said to his men when punishing the French Protestants, "Amuse yourselves, my children! pillage and violate!" However, so convinced was the Duc de Luxembourg that the King could not do without him, that when accused he merely snapped his fingers contemptuously at La Reynie, the vigorous Lieutenant de Police, and when threatened with trial refused even to take the trouble to leave Paris.



Another noble who was suspected of being a poisoner was the Comte de Clermont, the brother of the Comte de Soissons, who was generally credited with having helped Olympia to get rid of that brother.

Although no charges were formulated against the pair in connection with the death of their brother and husband, Olympia was to find herself involved before long upon another count. In the meantime her sister Maria Anna, Duchesse de Bouillon, was accused by La Reynie of attempting to murder her husband, and compelled to appear before the Court appointed by the King to investigate these poisoning charges, which was known as *La Chambre Ardente*. The Duchesse de Bouillon appeared before this commission daily, attended by crowds of nobles of both sexes. The beautiful Duchesse then bore herself most arrogantly, and denied the right of this tribunal to try the wife of a "Pair de France." She had, however, to answer some very awkward questions, and it became plain enough from her own admissions that she had been in the habit of visiting the sorceresses. Owing to the fact that her husband was, however, still alive, Olympia's sister came off with flying colours in the end, notwithstanding which fact the King banished her for a time to the south of France.

Despite the grand position which she held, as the King's cousin, it was not to be Olympia's good fortune to escape an accusation of having some



connection with the poisoners who were so much *à la mode*, for in the year that she sold her post in the Queen's Household, one of the women implicated her when undergoing "the question." The accusation brought against the Comtesse de Soissons was that, when the King had slighted her in favour of Louise de la Vallière, she had consulted Voisin upon two points. One was that she wished to know if she would regain the affections of Louis, the other if she could bring about the death of the King's lady-love, by whom she had been supplanted. The horrible sorceress further added that Olympia had expressed her determination to do away with both La Vallière and her Royal lover. She had too many enemies at the Court not to fall under such terrible charges, but if she were guilty, her punishment proved lighter than Madame de Montespan and others who hated her considered adequate. For Louis himself sent to warn the woman who had been his *chère amie* in early days that he had been asked to issue a warrant for her arrest, and told her that would she avoid the Bastille she had better leave Paris at once. The King told Olympia at the same time that while making herself scarce she had better take her friend the Marquise d'Alluye with her, that lady having been accused of being her accomplice.

After giving the Comtesse de Soissons and her friend full time to make their escape, which they did very quickly, Louis gave orders for their arrest.

The motives of the King in thus warning Olympia Mancini of her impending arrest have been much discussed, and the opinion, which is probably the correct one, has been advanced that Louis feared what a dangerous woman of her nature might say. It was not therefore any reminiscences of former tender passages between them which prompted his clemency, but the fear that she might, if brought to trial, make public many unsavoury details concerning his own private life known to her alone.

Olympia escaped to Brussels, where she again found princely admirers, although she was most unpopular among the people, who openly called her poisoner. After a year or two passed in the Low Countries, and having asked in vain for permission to return to Paris, she sailed for Spain with her son Eugène. There, at Madrid, she found her sister Marie, who had long since left her husband, but who had too many recollections of the ill-turns done her by her sister to consent to receive her upon very intimate terms.

The Comtesse de Soissons consoled herself, however, at the Spanish Court, where she found a very young French Princess in the wife of the weak-minded Carlos II. This was a daughter of Madame Henriette, Marie Louise by name. This unhappy young Queen was overpowered by the excess of the Spanish etiquette, miserable, moreover, in being away from France. In spite of the King's wishes that his wife should avoid a woman with a reputa-



ATHÉNAÏS DE MONTESPAN



tion for poisoning and sorcery, Marie Louise made a great friend of Olympia for a year or two, and this notwithstanding the fact that the influence of Louis XIV. was at work to procure her ejection from the Spanish Court. After this period Carlos II. suddenly ordered her to leave Madrid, he having declared that Olympia had bewitched his wife, and that this was the reason that his Queen remained childless.

Through the influence of the Austrian Ambassador, the order for the banishment of the Comtesse de Soissons was, however, rescinded, and it was this very Austrian influence which Louis XIV. feared that his former mistress might employ in Spain to the detriment of France. Louis had, however, only himself to thank for driving Olympia's son, Prince Eugène, into the Austrian service, to become the scourge of France. For when the youth had endeavoured to enter the French army, Louis had harshly refused him a commission.

For a time after the order for her expulsion there had been a considerable coolness between the Queen of Spain and Olympia, who considered that she had been deserted by Marie Louise in the matter. The quarrel was, however, healed, at all events in appearance, but the foolish King continued to fear the Comtesse de Soissons so greatly that he caused both himself and the Queen to be exorcised, both being at the time in a state

of nudity, to remove the spell of barrenness which he imagined she had cast over himself and his spouse.

Shortly after this extraordinary ceremony had been performed by a holy monk, a terrible event took place at Madrid. The young Queen was poisoned! There does not seem to have been any doubt about the matter, moreover Marie Louise had already expected to be poisoned, and had written to that effect to her father, the Duc Philippe d'Orléans, in France, from whom she demanded an antidote for poisons, which arrived too late. She was ill for three days, suffering as great agonies as had her mother before her, before she died in the beginning of the year 1689.

Now comes the extraordinary part of the business. Notwithstanding that she had no reason for desiring the Queen's death, Olympia was considered to have been guilty of poisoning her. Although the Dowager Queen Maria, the Austrian mother of Carlos II., and some Spanish nobles in the Austrian interests were probably those who actually murdered this unhappy French Princess, suspicions against Olympia were so strong that she was driven from Spain. After visiting various countries the Comtesse de Soissons returned to re-establish herself in Brussels, where she lived in great style until her death in 1708.



## CHAPTER XIV

### The Marquise de Brinvilliers

THE Illuminists, to which body the virtuous ladies of the Cabal belonged, and also the widow Scarron until the death of the Duchesse de Fontanges, preached the annihilation of the body and death of the will. Miguel de Molinos, who published a great work a year or two before the death of this young favourite of Louis XIV., amplified the doctrines of Illuminism, carrying still further the strange principle of the death of sin by the commission of sin.

That this was no new doctrine in France had been shown in the convents a little earlier, especially in that at Louviers, where Father David, the spiritual director of the nuns, had preached his "Adamite" theory of "primeval innocence." The better to understand this, the novices of the convent were compelled to go about entirely unclothed. This doctrine had fatal results where an unfortunate girl named Madeleine was concerned. This novice of sixteen, who created a great scandal in the Adamite convent by insisting upon covering herself with the altar-cloth in the chapel, first became the victim of a

Father Picart and then was tortured by the other nuns, by being stuck all over with needles, for being a witch. Becoming possessed of a devil indeed, the wretched child then caused the death by burning of other nuns whom she accused as sorceresses. The horrors and immoralities of the convent of Louviers, which were exposed fully, were but the result of a tenet of Illuminism, or Molinism, of the infamous doctrine that "the body cannot stain the soul."

The nuns of the convent of Louviers were dispersed, being sent to their homes during the time of the Fronde. The doctrines of moral paralysis with which they had been inculcated were, however, spread much further afield, first by the voluminous writings of Desmarets de Saint-Sorlin, the Intendant of the Duchesse de Richelieu, the leader of the Cabal, and then by Molinos. It is no wonder if the followers of these pernicious tenets, who were innumerable, stuck at nothing. Poisoning to them was nothing, and thus poisoning became daily more frequent among the higher classes, who had the time and the education to study the works of the exponents of Illuminism, Molinism, or, as called later, Quietism. Three persons who devoted many of their spare moments to these doctrines were the Marquis de Brinvilliers, a man who believed in taking pleasure in whatever manner it could be found, his pretty blue-eyed wife the Marquise, and their friend, the Chevalier de Saint-Croix.

This latter had been a cavalry officer, but leaving the army he devoted himself to the composition of Illuminist works and the search for a philosopher's stone by which he could bring about the transmutation of the baser metals into gold.

These pursuits, by the express wish of the Marquis, Saint-Croix usually carried on alone with young Madame de Brinvilliers, while her spouse was amusing himself elsewhere. The Marquise seems to have had the good sense to point out to her husband that so much solitude with an ex-cavalry officer was not advisable—that, at all events, people would talk. "Let them talk," replied M. de Brinvilliers, "go ahead!" So the Marquise, who was the daughter of a gentleman named Monsieur d'Auvray, went ahead accordingly with her studies, under the same roof with Saint-Croix, her teacher. For the respectable trio all lived together—it became in fact a case of a *ménage à trois*.

Some time had elapsed, when a friend of Saint-Croix, a wealthy man who was the Treasurer of the Estates of Languedoc, became dissatisfied with the extent of his fortune. His name was the Seigneur de Penautier, and he envied his friend the Seigneur de Saint-Laurent, who was the Receiver-General of the Clergy of France.

He failed, although supported by many Bishops, in his efforts to become associated in this lucrative post with Saint-Laurent, and thereupon became closely associated with the Marquise de Brinvilliers

and Saint-Croix, her worthy instructor in the occult arts.

The friendship was interrupted for a time, owing to an unforeseen event. The father and brothers of the blue-eyed Marquise, getting tired of hearing "the talk" which that young matron had rightly expected would ensue, determined to put an end to it. A *lettre de cachet* to put a friend or a relative in the Bastille was an easy thing to obtain in those days, by any one who knew one of the Ministers. Monsieur d'Auvray accordingly procured one of these interesting documents with the King's name signed at the bottom. The result of this action was that one fine day, when the Marquis de Brinvilliers returned to his home after amusing himself, he found his pretty little wife's eyes dimmed with tears.

"Where is Saint-Croix?" he inquired. "Why is he not here to console you?"

"The Chevalier de Saint-Croix has, alas! been spirited off to the Bastille," replied the Marquise.

"Hum!" ejaculated her husband, "perhaps you would be wise not to leave any papers about, it would be well for us to be careful. Who sent him to the Bastille?"

"That I cannot tell," replied his spouse, "but I suspect my father!"

"A disagreeable man, your father, and your brothers are not much better. I wonder if we had not better procure a *lettre de cachet* for them also before they do any more mischief?"

Upon second thoughts it was, however, resolved to leave the male members of the d'Auvray family alone—for the present. In the meantime, the missing Saint-Croix was by no means having a bad time of it in the Bastille, where one was lodged according to one's means. He even contrived to form a very desirable acquaintance for a man who desired to turn everything into gold.

John Baptist Pamphilo, who was celebrated as Pope Innocent X., had been ruled by a famous lady, the Signora Olympia. Over a hundred of this lady's friends had met with their death by mysterious means, while she had become the possessor of their accumulated wealth.

An agent of the Signora's in her peculiar methods of amassing riches had been a certain Exili, who knew strange secrets about poisons, and, the Pope being dead, this Exili in some way had contrived to get himself made a prisoner in the Bastille. There he and the Chevalier became intimate, Saint-Croix becoming possessed of much information, of which he made careful notes.

Being enlarged from the Bastille, the Chevalier renewed his intimacy with Madame de Brinvilliers, and, while he himself soon became the possessor of great riches from unknown sources, money was never now wanting in the Brinvilliers household. Thus, while the Marquise was able to continue to amuse herself in her own way, her husband, who, good easy man, asked no questions, was able to



continue his pursuits of pleasure upon an enlarged scale.

To avoid further talk, however, Madame de Brinvilliers now advised a separate household, and recommended the Chevalier to procure a wife without delay. This he did, his wealth enabling him to purchase one who, while pretty and well-bred, was also discreet enough not to trouble her husband with jealousy nor to ask too many questions.

The father and brothers of the Marquise were now remembered by that lady, and before long she was able to pay them out for having sent her lover to the Bastille. For, upon starting a separate establishment, the Chevalier had transferred to that of the Brinvilliers one of his two confidential servants, a man named Lachaussée. Shortly after Madame de Brinvilliers became possessed of this servant, her father and brothers were removed from the land of the living. No more *lettres de cachet* now!

The Chevalier's wealthy friend Penautier was also so lucky as to be offered the services of his other confidential valet, Saint-Georges by name. Not being in the least selfish, Penautier placed this servant with his friend the great financier, Saint-Laurent, who was glad of the opportunity of possessing such a treasure.

Unfortunately, the Receiver-General of the Clergy of France lived but a very short time after taking the ex-lackey of Saint-Croix into his establishment.



While greatly deploring his friend's unexpected decease, the Seigneur de Penautier now became the tenant of his lucrative office, which brought him in yearly some two hundred thousand livres.

All now went well for a few years with all the persons of our story, although how many people they were instrumental in putting out of the way is a pure matter of conjecture. Death, however, even when not caused by mysterious Italian poisons, is no respecter of persons! Suddenly the Chevalier fell ill—so sick was he that he felt he had barely the time left to him in which to make a decent religious termination to his career. He had, however, the satisfaction of being able to transmit to the Seigneur de Penautier certain documents, for which that worthy sent in a hurry, and to receive the comforts of religion before he died.

Now two new personages enter upon the scene, Madame de Saint-Croix and an official known as the Commissaire Picard. Being, as we have mentioned, very discreet, the Chevalier's widow lost no time in sealing up her husband's effects in the presence of the Commissaire, an officer who was discreet like herself. There was, however, one sharper than herself, or indeed than the Marquise de Brinvilliers, on the *qui vive*. This was Madame d'Auvray, the young widow of one of the brothers of the Marquise. She contrived to send a police agent named Cluet, who bothered Madame de Saint-Croix and the excellent Commissaire Picard ex-

ceedingly during the ceremony of the legal sealing up of the Chevalier's effects.

Ferretting his nose into everything, this busybody of a detective contrived to seize upon, and actually to open, a box which did not concern him in the least. For it contained merely private affairs : a packet of love-letters from the blue-eyed Marquise to the Chevalier, a deed of gift from the same lady to the same gentleman, and a parcel in which were a number of packets containing powders which were poisons, upon which was written " For M. Penautier."

What had attracted the attention of the persistent detective Cluet, and caused him to insist upon opening the box, in spite of the Commissaire's remonstrances, had been its superscription. This ran : " For the love of God, whom I adore, I pray that this box be delivered to the Marquise de Brinvilliers."

Picard from this moment did all that he could to shield the Seigneur de Penautier : he contrived to burn a paper upon which Saint-Croix had written a confession ; he falsified dates upon, and contrived to lose several pages of, the *procès-verbal* which had been drawn up in the presence and with the concurrence of Cluet. One of the two servants mentioned above disappeared, the other gave only very contradictory evidence about the Marquise de Brinvilliers. Saint-Croix being dead, this man did not, however, scruple to say that he it was who had

poisoned the members of the family of d'Auvray. When this domestic attempted to say anything to implicate Penautier, his mouth was promptly closed, for not a word would be listened to against such a respectable and wealthy person. By a timely use of his wealth, he now provided the Marquise with the funds to make good her escape to Liège, where she took refuge in a convent and edified the nuns by her excessive piety.

Madame de Brinvilliers was now safe, without the dominions of Louis XIV. Being, however, somewhat lonely, she welcomed the attentions which soon were paid to her by a suave *abbé*, who commenced to visit her in her retreat. Being, like herself, an Illuminist, his conversation proved most agreeable, and before long the Marquise readily consented to meet the pleasant *abbé* without the convent walls and to go with him for a pleasant promenade.

She kept her appointment, but alas! had only too soon cause to realise that men were deceivers ever! As they were strolling along together in a bosky grove, several men sprang out and seized the Marquise. She was bundled into a carriage and four, which opportunely made its appearance, when the agreeable *abbé*, seating himself opposite to the Marquise, and removing his clerical disguise, informed the lady that he had the honour to introduce himself as M. Desgrais, of the Parisian police.

Madame de Brinvilliers was spirited off to Paris,

but on the journey the considerate M. Desgrais gave her every opportunity of making a friend of one of the disguised archers who had effected her seizure. To this friendly archer, whom she promised to pay highly for his sympathy, she most incautiously revealed a great deal too much of her private affairs. She also seriously implicated that great man, the Receiver-General of the Clergy of France.

Everything that she confided to the Archer Barbier was subsequently brought up against her, to her detriment. Nevertheless, such was her charm that the Marquis was treated most courteously by her judges, notwithstanding the fact that she owned to poisoning her father and brothers.

The object of these judges seemed, indeed, not to allow her to talk. The torture, which was applied to her as a form, was a mere farce, while nothing that she said concerning Penautier was taken seriously.

The Marquise de Brinvilliers was, nevertheless, condemned to die. Yet, even in inflicting the death penalty, such was the sympathy of her judges that they spared her the usual punishment for parricide, that of having her hand cut off before execution. Nor was the blue-eyed Marquise burned at the stake, which was the usual punishment accorded to those convicted of poisoning—she was simply condemned to be beheaded.

When she was brought to the scaffold, many of the greatest people in France were terrified lest

Madame de Brinvilliers should incriminate them in her dying confessions. The unhappy woman, however, merely made a short dying speech: “What, no pity! And yet so many are guilty! Why should I die alone?”

When her head had fallen Paris breathed more freely, and among those who experienced the greatest relief was the Comtesse de Soissons. As for the Seigneur de Penautier, he escaped scot-free. For had he not the Bishops on his side?

## CHAPTER XV

### Installation of Madame de Maintenon

THE maiden name of Madame Scarron, who blossomed out into the Marquise de Maintenon, was Françoise d'Aubigné. She came of a celebrated Protestant family, her grandfather having been the Theodore Agrippa d'Aubigné who was for so long the right hand of Henri de Navarre. She was born in a prison at Niort, but in her early youth allowed herself to be converted to the Catholic faith by the nuns of a convent in which she was confined.

After living for a time in Paris in intimacy with a Comtesse d'Olonne, who became jealous of her good looks and attractive manners, Françoise found herself neglected. She thereupon became the victim of a rich young gentleman named Fadio Lamorinière, who had bribed the *concierge* of Madame d'Olonne's hôtel to let him live in a room next to that of Mademoiselle d'Aubigné at the top of the house. During Fadio's absence in the south, the Comtesse persuaded the crippled and witty buffoon, the Abbé Scarron, an abbé who was, however,



not in holy orders, that he would do well to marry the girl of whose presence she was tired. Scarron saw the young lady a time or two, and generously offered her either marriage or a dowry to enter a convent, when Françoise said that she preferred the former.

Shortly after her marriage, Fadio reappeared upon the scene, and contrived to get Scarron to engage him, he having disguised himself as a Breton valet, under the name of Alain Kerbrack. As a valet Lamorinière did not prove so successful as a lover, especially as he refused to put up tamely with the Abbé's crabbed ill-humour. For the satirical poet, who was confined to his arm-chair, was famous on account of his biting remarks. These Fadio found less to his taste than the charms of Scarron's wife, and the young fellow, in consequence, began to indulge himself in numerous absences without the formality of asking leave. During these periods he was in the habit of dressing himself like other young gentlemen of his station, and amusing himself in Paris. One day a friend of the famous wit, whose house was the resort of half Paris, came in with a fine story.

“A nice valet you have got, M. l'Abbé! I have just met him dressed like a fine gentleman, with a girl hanging upon his arm concerning whose character the less said the better. Why, my poor friend, can you not see that you have been imposed upon? The fellow is simply masquerading

here on account of your wife's *beaux yeux*—he is no more a lackey than I am!”

The Abbé Scarron merely laughed. “What you tell me is most diverting. That is a situation which I must surely introduce into the next play I write concerning deceived husbands.”

When his “valet” came home, the poet humorously advised him to be off at once and for ever, without attempting to say farewell to his mistress, who might not perchance receive him so kindly as usual. Lamorinière took the hint, and from very shame avoiding Françoise, whom he had for long ardently pursued before effecting her fall from virtue, promptly left Scarron’s house.

After his disappearance from the scene, the wife of Scarron was not long before she found one gay seigneur after another sighing at her feet. Nor did they all sigh in vain. Were we implicitly to believe the scurrilous tongue of the Maréchale de la Ferté, a lady who more than the Comtesse d’Olonne had recommended Françoise to the Abbé as a wife, her indiscretions were indeed numerous, the celebrated Ninon de l’Enclos allowing Madame Scarron to make use of her house for her assignations.

Scarron persisted in seeing only the humorous side of his marital misfortunes. He contrived, however, to make Françoise feel very small when one day he raked to his chair with his crutch stick, and read, a letter which fell from her pocket.



MADAME DE MAINTENON

By P. Giffart



This note he had just observed her latest gallant, Charles de Beuvron, pressing into his wife's hands. In it the gentleman talked of the delights (*délices*) which they had shared together, and of the treasures of flame (*trésors de flamme*) which they had both in reserve for their next meeting.

De Beuvron had, however, written "*dellices*" and "*flame*." In handing the letter back to his wife with a sneer, Scarron satirically suggested that, in replying to her adorer, she would do well to tell him that *délices* was spelled with only one "l," while in *flamme* he had forgotten an "m."

As Scarron himself told the anecdote to all the fine ladies and gentlemen who visited him, he punished his wife by making her look like a fool, while the unfortunate Beuvron never heard the last of his spelling.

After her husband's death, when Madame Scarron became the governess of the semi-Royal children of the Marquise de Montespan, she threw in her lot with the ladies of the Cabal, and amended her morals. Until the King bestowed upon her a large estate and a title none at the Court could raise the finger of reproach against her, nor even when, after the death of Fontanges, Louis visited her nightly from six to ten did she cast off any of the prudish reserve which had made her name irreproachable. For she asserted that she was merely working at the King's conversion.

The time came, however, when Madame de

Maintenon could pose no longer. This was when the Queen died. Poor Maria Theresa was short and stout, and numerous journeys made with the King during the hot summer of 1683 caused her death.

Louis was then forty-five years of age, and his son the Dauphin had already been married, for the second time, to Maria Anna of Bavaria, a Princess of some character. On the day of the Queen's death the Duc de la Rochefoucauld accosted the Marquise de Maintenon as she was leaving the death-chamber. He had a message for her, to the effect that the King wanted her at once. In spite of the efforts of the Dauphine to restrain Louis XIV., he instantly drove off with Madame de Maintenon to the Palace of Saint-Cloud. To prevent his son's wife from following them, the King sent a couple of physicians with orders immediately to bleed that Princess. Maria Anna followed, however, five days later to Fontainebleau, after having recovered from the effects of her bleeding. Thither the King had proceeded with the former governess of his illegitimate children after remaining for only two days at Saint-Cloud. When the Dauphine arrived she found that she was altogether too late to prevent a great scandal. For the Marquise de Maintenon was occupying the Royal apartments in the palace, and even the late Queen's bed.

She had now thrown over the Cabal and its



Illuminist principles for ever, but she found herself severely opposed by the Jesuits—the friends of the Cabal by whose orders Protestant children were kidnapped and forcibly converted.

The Jesuits, however, came to terms with the Marquise after she had been living as the King's mistress for over four years. A bargain was struck between them to the effect that if she would encourage Louis XIV. to persecute the unfortunate Protestants they would remove all opposition to her marriage with the King.

To these terms the former Protestant, Françoise d'Aubigné, having readily agreed, in the year 1685 occurred two events. One of these was the marriage to Louis XIV., which took place in secret, of the Marquise de Maintenon, the other, which followed this marriage, the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, by which the Huguenots had been hitherto allowed certain civil and religious liberties.

There now ensued in France the terrible "dragonnades," the awful destruction of the Protestants throughout the Kingdom. This was accomplished with every conceivable atrocity, and for the untold horrors suffered by matrons and maidens Madame de Maintenon, the pious prude, was directly responsible.

## CHAPTER XVI

### Madame de Guyon and Quietism

WHEN, after the secret marriage of the King to Scarron's widow, the terrible "dragonnades" began for the forcible conversion of the Protestants, the sound of weeping and lamentation was to be heard all over France. While the gentlest and most refined ladies were subjected to every humiliation and torture, such even as being roasted over a huge fire, or singed like a fowl, by the soldiers, their children were also torn from them for conversion. For a decree was issued a month or two after the marriage of Louis to his mistress that "from the age of five years to sixteen, every child is to be carried off in the space of eight days." These Protestant children were placed in cold convents, where they were forced to remain long hours on their knees and flogged into conversion. The sufferings of the children were so great that many of them died, but, even when of quite tender years, refused conversion in spite of all the horrors inflicted upon them, and thus died martyrs as Protestants.

Many convents of "New Catholics" were, however, established during this awful period, wherein the incarcerated victims were systematically bullied into yielding, at all events verbally, by the nuns. At Uzès these gentle nuns flogged eight Protestant young ladies, aged from sixteen to twenty, with straps to which were attached pieces of lead. The better to humiliate these poor girls they were stripped naked and flogged in the presence of a judge, a major, and other male witnesses. Their piercing screams were heard without in the streets.

Meanwhile, at Versailles, Madame de Maintenon, herself once a Protestant be it remembered, remarked piously, "God makes use of every means!"

From Versailles this ex-governess now controlled everything and everybody, and notably the Generals of the King's armies in the field, whose movements were in consequence constantly hampered, greatly to the disadvantage of France. The various misfortunes which at times befel such soldiers as Boufflers, Villeroi, Vendôme, Catinat, and Tallard were not as a rule the result of their own incapacity, but of the régime of petticoat government, by which they were unable to pursue any tactics save those which originated in the apartments of the Marquise de Maintenon.

This lady had for some years past openly deserted the elderly Illuminist Duchesses by whom she had been patronised when, with their approval, labouring for "the King's conversion." She now, however,

while forming a kind of educational establishment under her own supervision for noble young ladies at Saint-Cyr, was consorting with four young Duchesses who were Quietists, that is to say belonging to a sect which was merely a refined variety of Molinism. The head of this sect, in fact the inventor of Quietism and the apostle of pure love and mystic death, was a very charming and handsome lady named Madame de Guyon. The four young Duchesses were the three daughters of Colbert, the Duchesses de Beauvilliers, de Mortemart, and de Chevreuse, and the daughter of Colbert's enemy Fouquet, the Duchesse de Béthune-Charost. These ladies had the courage to be good-hearted in a time of savage religious fanaticism so great that dying women who avowed themselves Protestants were being dragged about naked on hurdles by the hangmen until they expired, when their bodies were left exposed to public insult.

It required courage indeed to venture to do anything to improve the lot of Protestant maidens at a time when these, when found attempting to escape from France in boy's clothing, were thrown into the horrible "Hôpital," to dwell among abandoned women and degraded men, who were all mixed up together. But, animated by the virtuous counsels of the somewhat erratic Quietist leader Madame de Guyon, the four Duchesses did not scruple to suggest a new and more humane treat-

ment for the poor young Protestant ladies whom it was sought to convert to Catholicism. They suggested to Madame de Maintenon, and through her to the King whom she ruled, that kindness should be tried instead of the severity which more often than not merely succeeded in producing martyrs. While the Bishop of Lodève was daily beating with his fists a young lady who refused to listen to his catechising, while the *curés* who were the directors of Madame de Saint-Simon and Madame de Lamoignon were, in their uncontrolled fury, throwing kidnapped Protestant girls from the windows when they proved recalcitrant, the Quietist Duchesses advocated the establishment of a convent of "Nouvelles Catholiques" in Paris where gentle means of persuasion should be employed instead of force.

Although the King hated Quietism, a cult of altogether too spiritual a character to suit his brutal, carnal nature, Madame de Maintenon was, like the four Duchesses, so greatly won over by the charm of Madame de Guyon as to take a delight in secretly meeting her and in listening to her conversation.

Although, in order to attain her ends, the Marquise had been forced to come to terms with the Jesuits, the spiritual director of Madame de Maintenon was no Jesuit, but Godet of the non-militant order of Saint-Sulpice, who became Bishop of Chartres.



The strongest cleric at the Court, and the main support of Louis XIV. in his struggle against Papal authority, was Bishop Jacques Bénigne Bossuet, the celebrated orator, and probably the strongest prelate ever seen in France, who was Bishop of Meaux.

Neither of these was allowed to have a hint that anything connected with Quietism had in any way affected the formation of the new convent in which the Protestant inmates were treated as human beings, being allowed cleanly surroundings and a garden wherein to enjoy themselves. Above all, not even Madame de Maintenon was openly supplied by the four Duchesses with the charming young abbé whom they put forward for the post of Superior of the new community. It was the notoriously immoral Harlay de Champvallon, Archbishop of Paris, a prelate who could refuse nothing to the smiles of either Duchesse or *grisette*, who was caused to suggest to the Marquise their nominee for the post, which he was offered and accepted. This was that *spirituel* cleric, the clever and gently insidious scion of an old noble family, François de Salignac de la Mothe Fénelon. After his appointment this able young man soon became beloved by all the young hearts that he led to conversion with a silken string.

As Fénelon was later to become notorious in connection with Madame de Guyon, and to suffer through her, we must now give a sketch of the



career of that remarkable lady, with whose name, as that of her defender Fénelon, Europe was before long to be ringing.

Her maiden name was Jeanne Bouvières de la Mothe, and la Mothe being also, as it will be noticed, one of the family names of the Salignacs, she may possibly have been a connection of Fénelon, although we do not find the fact mentioned. Of a noble family of Montargis, the youthful Jeanne was in childhood brought up in Ursuline and Benedictine convents, and by the age of twelve she had developed a religious spirit, while such was her memory that she had learned a great part of the Bible by heart. In this she resembled the great Bossuet, later to become her persecutor, who knew by heart the whole of Isaiah by the age of sixteen.

Jeanne de la Mothe appears from her autobiography to have early considered herself destined for the service of God. She says that in her youthful years she had the name of the Saviour visibly written on her body. At all events, while still a young girl she vowed to aim at the highest perfection, by the absolute surrender of her will to God. This intention seems to have been throughout her life the keynote of Madame de Guyon's romantic mysticism, for she taught later that the apathetic and passive contemplation of the Deity constituted religious perfection upon earth.

Being foiled in an attempt, which she had made by the use of a forged letter from her mother, to

take the veil, Jeanne de la Mothe was taken by her father to Paris, when her youthful beauty and attractive manners made her a great favourite in distinguished society. Her father soon married her, the girl when only fifteen being given to a rich gentleman, M. de Guyon, who was thirty-seven years old. The disparity of years did not lead to great connubial bliss, although the disturbing element in Jeanne's household was not so much her husband as her mother-in-law, who was jealous of the attraction caused by her daughter-in-law's charm and talent. Although she bore two sons and a daughter to M. de Guyon, she seems to have suffered from a lonely and desolate heart, from which she became comforted by "quiet in God" at the age of twenty. She indulged in perpetual prayer, which filled her with joy and peace, while, she says, the fervency of her love allowed her no intermission. "It was a prayer of rejoicing and of possession, wherein the taste of God was so great, pure, unblended and uninterrupted, that it absorbed the powers of the soul into a profound recollection, a state of confiding and affectionate rest in God without any intellectual effort."

Feeling like this, notwithstanding her married state, Madame de Guyon at the age of twenty-four determined to espouse Christ in a marriage ceremony.

This strange espousal was carried out for her by the Prioress of a Benedictine Convent in Paris.

This good lady, Geneviève Granger by name, drew out a marriage document between Madame de Guyon and Our Saviour. By it Jeanne surrendered herself to Christ as his spouse, accepting as a part of her marriage portion the temptations and sorrows, crosses and contempts which fell on Him.

This strange contract Madame de Guyon sealed with her ring and signed with her blood. The remarkable circumstance is to be noticed that, notwithstanding the sacredness of this union, the self-elected spouse of Christ continued to live *maritalement* with her husband, to whom she bore a daughter several years after her spiritual marriage.

Shortly after the birth of this, her last child, Madame de Guyon became a widow. Becoming now despondent and thinking herself forsaken of God, she found a consoler in Père François de la Combe, the Superior of the Barnabites of Thonon in Savoy.

With this priest her life became closely interwoven, she being no longer depressed, and having, as she says, "found God again," who returned to her "with unspeakable magnificence and purity." The Quietest leader soon converted de la Combe to her peculiar tenets, which he began to preach. She was now over thirty years old, but, disdaining several offers of marriage, Madame de Guyon went through a second ceremony of espousal with the Saviour, which took place before the tomb of

Saint François de Sales at Annecy, the celestial marriage being celebrated by Bishop d'Aranthon.

Living at Gex near Geneva, and declaring herself the "spiritual mother" of Père de la Combe, Jeanne de Guyon now busied herself with charitable and religious works. She also assembled people to whom she expounded her doctrines of "annihilation in faith" and of "present sanctification" until she aroused the hostility of her former friend Bishop d'Aranthon of Geneva. This prelate, who was for a long time gently tolerant of her views, at length considered her proceedings and those of her spiritual son as heretical. She had to leave Gex, but after living for a time at Thonon, near de la Combe, and establishing there a small hospital, the Bishop of Geneva compelled her and her priestly associate to withdraw themselves entirely from the neighbourhood of Geneva. She removed to Turin and then to Grenoble, where she was much beloved, and especially became the object of passionate worship of two young ladies, who nearly went crazy for love of Madame de Guyon and refused to leave her in her varied wanderings. Despite more clerical opposition, Madame de Guyon now openly proclaimed to the world her doctrines of fixed love and complete identification of the human will with that of God in a romantically written work. This book, which she called *Les Torrents*, compared the human soul rushing to meet its Creator to the mountain torrents dashing down hill into the boundless ocean.

It was well and poetically written, and attracted immense attention and brought, moreover, many followers to the Quietist sect.

This work Madame de Guyon followed by the publication of a treatise on “silent and wordless prayer,” and one of Commentaries on the Bible.

Her meetings for “self-recollection in God” caused the good lady, however, further trouble at Grenoble, whence she was requested to remove herself, although in no unfriendly spirit, by Bishop Camus. After wanderings in Italy, and her capture with one of her attached young ladies by brigands, whose hearts Madame de Guyon softened so that they spared them outrage, she came to Paris, where society, and notably the four Duchesses above mentioned, received her with open arms. Two years after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, her proceedings made the Church more than uneasy. Her personal character was attacked, and first de la Combe was confined in the Bastille, by a *lettre de cachet*, and then she herself a few months later in a convent. The charges against Madame de Guyon were: heretical opinions, holding private religious ceremonies, and, above all, corresponding with Molinos, whose great work the *Guida Spirituale* had just been condemned by the Inquisition in Rome.

The influence of the Duchesses with Madame de Maintenon, however, soon procured the liberation of Madame de Guyon, but her spiritual son was kept



in prison for several years by the Archbishop of Paris. De la Combe eventually died of melancholy and love for Madame de Guyon—he left it on record in writing that he was “lost, broken in despair for love of her.”

She, having regained her liberty, charmed all who came in contact with her by her power of making all hearts fly towards her. Madame de Maintenon introduced her to her establishment at Saint-Cyr, where the young ladies there being educated proceeded to shower the tenderest tokens of youthful love and devotion upon this extraordinary woman.

It was at this period of her life, and when staying with her daughter, now the young Comtesse de Vaux, with the Duchesse de Béthune-Charost, that Madame de Guyon first met Fénelon, who had some time previously assumed the control of the convent of young girls still Protestant, and commenced with the greatest success to overcome their stubbornness, not by argument but by religious tenderness.

Even before meeting Madame de Guyon, Fénelon was in the habit of throwing a dash of romantic mysticism into his teaching of the young Protestants, and when he met the fair prophetess of Quietism he at once felt that they were on the same plane. For although he had never allowed the fact to transpire openly, Fénelon was more than half a Quietist in disguise.

His meeting with Madame de Guyon was, however, fated to prove more than unfortunate for



Fénelon, as it was to cost him later the favour both of Louis XIV. and the Pope.

Fénelon was a saint but a secretive one. None knew therefore, that is to say for a long time to come, that, while sharing with many others an excessive admiration for Madame de Guyon, he saw nothing heretical in her peculiar form of mysticism. His was a peculiar genius—the genius of pleasing and of elegant writing more than that of thinking, and in this he greatly resembled the woman whom he met under the roof of the Duchesse de Charost.

Born in 1651, the Abbé Fénelon was but three years her junior, and having shone too greatly when a mere boy of fifteen in the Jesuit Collège du Plessis, his sensible matter-of-fact uncle, the Marquis de Fénelon, removed him to the more commonplace foundation of Saint-Sulpice. Nor would this uncle allow him to follow his early inclinations to become a missionary to Canada or to Greece, where his ardent spirit longed to contemplate, and perhaps occupy as a preacher, the exact spot on the Areopagus whence Saint Paul had proclaimed the unknown God. When appointed by Archbishop Harlay to his post in charge of the Protestant maidens, Fénelon was but twenty-seven years of age. In this post he remained for ten years, his greatest friends and protectors being the Duc and Duchesse de Beauvilliers, the latter being likewise the friend and secret disciple of Madame de Guyon.

After François de Salignac de Fénelon had blossomed out as an author, and written his famous treatise *De l'Éducation des Filles*—a lasting work—he went to Poitou to endeavour to convert the Protestants. His methods, especially that of sending away the troops from Poitou and Saintonge in order to alleviate the horrors of the dragonnades, did not appeal to the licentious Archbishop of Paris.

After his return and having elected to go back to his post at the Nouvelles Catholiques, Harlay, who had hoped to use Fénelon for more militant work, spoke to him angrily: “It seems, M. l’Abbé, that you wish to be forgotten! Well, you shall be!”

The Duc de Beauvilliers had, however, been appointed to the post of Governor to the young Duc de Bourgogne, the eldest son of the Dauphin Louis, and the Duc now upset the Archbishop’s calculations by inducing Louis XIV. to appoint Fénelon to the post of Preceptor to that young Prince. Harlay, however, spitefully succeeded in preventing the King from making the clever Abbé Bishop of Poitiers.

To see what his contemporaries thought of Fénelon, we cannot do better than quote the Duc de Saint-Simon, who, for once, is more than charitable when speaking of this gifted teacher, who was celebrated for his sweetness of temper, tact, and address, with which was associated inflexibility of principle and the refined manners of a *Grand Seigneur*.

The Duc says of Fénelon that he had "eyes whence fire and talent streamed like a torrent, and a physiognomy which I have seen in no other man and which one could never forget. It united seriousness and gaiety, gravity and courtesy, everything about him being refinement, intellect, gracefulness, modesty, and, above all, *noblesse*."

The ease of conversation, grace, and good taste of the instructor of the Duc de Bourgogne are even further commented upon by the writer of the famous memoirs of the Court of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Such then was the man who meeting Madame de Guyon became her friend. When, before long, Archbishop Harlay de Champvallon became actively hostile to this woman of strange and restless temperament, Fénelon, who was attracted by her enthusiasm and mysticism, tried to befriend her. He was at that time on the best of terms with Bishop Bossuet, and accordingly recommended Madame de Guyon to place her writings in the hand of that prelate. The better to aid his fair friend, Fénelon lent his personal assistance to the Bishop of Meaux, by explaining to him various mystical writers whom the great orator declared, and probably with reason, to be beyond his comprehension.

Fortunately for the Abbé Fénelon, he was appointed by the influence of Louis XIV. to the Archbishopric of Cambrai, and thus became an

ecclesiastical Prince of the Empire, before Bossuet and other Bishops interviewed Madame de Guyon to learn from her own lips concerning "the new spirituality." Not being pleased, one of these, Nicole of the famous Institution of Port-Royal, published a Refutation of the Errors of the Quietists, in which he attacked not only the religious views but the morals of the prophetess of the cult. Her doctrines of "pure love" were publicly condemned by the Church, and Madame de Guyon thrust into the Château de Vincennes for refusing to acknowledge her errors.

Bossuet now wrote against her, and apparently expected Fénelon to subscribe his name to his work as approving of it. When the Prince Archbishop of Cambrai not only declined to support the Bishop of Meaux but published his *Maximes des Saintes*, which was charmingly written from a Quietist point of view, Bossuet became enraged with his former friend.

A bitter controversy began, one in which Bossuet's violence and intrigue were met by Fénelon with the meekness and dignity of a saint. The Bishop of Meaux contrived, however, to inspire Louis XIV. with fury, in a great measure by falsely representing that Fénelon's famous book *Télémarque*, compiled for the amusement of the Duc de Bourgogne, had been aimed maliciously at the King's mode of governing France. While Fénelon was for ever banished from the Court to his Archbishopric at

Cambrai, and likewise condemned by the Pope, Madame de Guyon, whose cause he had championed, was left to languish in prison for seven years. She was then banished to Blois, where she lived respected in the best society until she died an orthodox Catholic ten years after her release from Vincennes.

## CHAPTER XVII

### Marie Adélaïde and Marie Louise de Savoie

A VERY important young lady, who by the hold which she held over Louis XIV. was the cause of plunging all Europe into a long and bloody war, was Marie Adélaïde of Savoy. This little Princess, only about twelve years of age when she came to France, was the eldest daughter of Duke Victor Amadeus II. and a daughter of Madame Henriette, the ill-fated English Duchesse d'Orléans who was supposed to have been poisoned through the agency of the Chevalier de Lorraine.

Married when still a romping girl to Louis, Duc de Bourgogne, the grandson of Louis XIV., before she had reached her fifteenth year Marie Adélaïde was the life of the Court, which had become terribly dull since the inauguration of the reign of Madame de Maintenon. This child had inherited much of the lightness of character and deportment which had characterised her great-grandfather, Henri de Navarre, thus she delighted the heart of the coarse-minded King by her *espiègleries* and vulgar girlish



tricks. These, though all unbecoming in a married Princess, wife of the heir to the Crown, made Louis XIV. laugh, and while the King laughed at her coarse drolleries and remarks, not even the now very sedate Marquise de Maintenon was able entirely to frown down the girl's extreme frivolity.

Such tricks as throwing herself upon her back on the floor and causing herself to be dragged by the legs along the polished parquet at Versailles were nothing to other performances of the fifteen-year-old Princess. Some of these were indeed of such a disgusting nature that, notwithstanding the hilarity with which they inspired Louis XIV., we cannot venture here to describe her ridiculous antics.

Her husband, the son of Louis the Dauphin, was but a boy himself, and one with childish tastes. These remained with him even when, having reached the supposed years of discretion, he was associated with his profligate, but able and warlike cousin, the Duc de Vendôme, in command of the armies of France. While, owing to the careful instruction he received from Fénelon, the Duc de Bourgogne was pious, with a piety which later amounted to bigotry, when in the field he showed no valour, and vastly preferred playing at battledore and shuttlecock to getting into close touch with the enemy. His fondness for this childish game earned for the husband of Marie Adélaïde a severe rebuke from a young noble of his suite when at the siege of Lille. This gentleman reminded him roughly

and disrespectfully that he would do far better to be imitating the tactics of his opponents, Prince Eugène and the Duke of Marlborough.

Marie Adélaïde, while never troubled by her husband's religious tendencies, disregarded them, and became a shameless young flirt, even while lying on the floor and kicking her heels in the air to amuse that husband's Royal grandfather.

She was a young lady who possessed a dollish kind of beauty, relieved by black eyes from which blazed an ardent fire, and, in spite of her nonsensical ways, was cunning to a degree. This cunning she displayed with success in the means she employed to get round the prudish Madame de Maintenon. When she flattered the Marquise by calling her "Aunt," she contrived to obtain her own way with Scarron's former wife, no matter how much that lady objected to her behaviour, whether in the matter of frivolity or flirtation.

It was at the end of the year 1700 that the saucy little Princess, then just fifteen, was by her artlessness the cause of the opening of the eighteenth century being celebrated for the war which, lasting for fourteen years, was known as that of the Spanish Succession.

In that year, disregarding a treaty of partition of his dominions which had been recently made by the European Powers, the weak Carlos II. of Spain, when at the point of death and having no heir, made a will to upset all existing claims. It

had been arranged by the treaty that Spain, the Netherlands, and the Indies were to go to the Archduke Charles of Austria, while the Duke of Lorraine was to become Duke of Milan. Further, the Powers had agreed among themselves that France was to receive Naples and all other Spanish possessions in Italy.

Carlos II. by his will left his Crown and all his dominions to a grandson of his brother-in-law Louis XIV., upon the condition that this young son of the Dauphin should renounce all claim to the succession of the Crown of France for himself and his possible heirs.

Shortly after making this will Carlos II., who was still a young man, died.

When the provisions of the will lay upon the Council table of Louis XIV. at Versailles upon November 8, 1700, the King, Madame de Maintenon, and the Duc de Beauvilliers looked at them with longing eyes, but also with terror. For well they knew to accept them would mean that the devils of hatred and rage of a jealous Europe would be unchained against France.

"I will not accept the will!" exclaimed Louis XIV., regretfully repressing the ambition of ruling Spain and her great possessions through Philippe, Duc d'Anjou, the younger brother of the Duc de Bourgogne.

For once the King found his decision called in question. His forty-year-old son, Louis the Dauphin, with face red with rage, declared that it

was grossly unfair to deprive his second son of such a heritage. With him were two Ministers, Barbezieux, Minister of War, son of the fiery Louvois, recently dead from apoplexy as a result of the King's injustice, and Torcy, who was Secretary for Foreign Affairs. They added their entreaties to those of the Dauphin that the King should not let slip such a golden opportunity. Louis XIV. paused, hesitated, but, the Duc de Beauvilliers gravely pointing out to him the danger of changing his mind, merely shook his head. No, he would not change his policy!

There was, however, one present, in addition to the two young Princes, the Dauphin's sons, one whom no one in that assembly thought of consulting or even considering in such a crisis, and yet one possessed of a very definite policy, although in an apparently scatter-brain head.

While silence reigned in the gilded chamber, and all alike were gazing covetously upon the papers on the table, a girlish voice rang out:

"I think that the King would be very silly to refuse Spain for his grandson!"

King, Dauphin, Marquise, Ministers, Princes, all started, and turned to look at the young Princess of Savoy, who had spoken.

Quite unabashed, and with pouting lips, the Duchesse de Bourgogne repeated her words:

"I say that it will be very silly of the King if he refuses!"

Now was there silence no longer, but animated conversation, discussion, and argument. Only Madame de Maintenon and the Duc de Beauvilliers could neither of them be brought by Louis to say that they shared with the King his own evident inclination to be guided by a flighty child's apparently irresponsible remark rather than by the sager counsels of solid statecraft.

The Marquise, when appealed to, behaved diplomatically. She said that the King was very wise, that M. le Dauphin was full of great and noble ideas, but her own opinions she refused to express one way or another. Had she dared to do so, she would have reproved the saucy Duchesse de Bourgogne, but the Marquise did not dare, seeing how highly popular were the girl's views with the majority of the august assembly. For it was by judiciously effacing herself when in the presence of the Dauphin, to gain her ends in private with the King, that Madame de Maintenon contrived to retain her position and influence. Besides, she had to consider the future—for if Louis XIV. should die, M. le Dauphin would be the wearer of the Crown.

Upon this occasion she could not venture to jeopardise her position by saying the truth, that she approved of the sensible remarks of the Duc de Beauvilliers and considered the Dauphin's daughter-in-law absolutely in the wrong. While the argument went on, not one there present was aware, however, that it was but as the result of an



ambitious policy that the fifteen-year-old Princess had ventured to speak so lightly on the subject of the acceptance of the fatal legacy. This policy was that Marie Adélaïde had fully determined to make a Queen of Spain of her little sister, Marie Louise of Savoy. Thus it was necessary that her brother-in-law Philippe d'Anjou should be installed on the Spanish throne first, and then she would see that he married Marie Louise. She could manage the King, whom she delighted with her pranks, and would get him to consent to the match. Thus there would be two Queens in Europe of the House of Savoy, for her husband, she reckoned, would be King of France some day.

At length Louis XIV., who could not make up his mind, exclaimed, "*La nuit porte conseil*," and closed the discussion.

During the night, whatever he may have said to the Marquise, that she was evidently determined not to risk offending the Dauphin was evident by what transpired on the morrow. For Louis then announced that his little favourite had been in the right, and that he would not be so foolish as to reject a throne for his grandson.

Thus the die was cast, and a lad of seventeen was proclaimed King of Spain as Philip V.

Yet in accepting the will of Carlos II., Louis XIV. disregarded its terms, by which it had been sought to prevent the possibility of France and Spain ever being united under the same crowned head. For



the King caused the Parliament of Paris to put it on its records that the succession to the Crown of France was reserved to the second son of M. le Dauphin, now become His Majesty the King of Spain.

This boy soon set out for his capital, Madrid, taking with him the daughter of his former nurse, a young woman whose presence was the more resented in Spain as the new King appointed the girl's father to some important post.

Philip was a very athletic youth and, while resigning to his grandfather, Louis XIV., the control of all his provincial Governors in the Low Countries, troubled himself at first with little but sport and open-air exercises.

That cunning girl, the Duchesse de Bourgogne, having placed her brother-in-law upon a throne, was not, however, going for long to allow him to enjoy himself in his own way. She continued to cajole Louis XIV. with her girlish tricks and indecent jests until she induced him to consent to the marriage of his grandson to her twelve-year-old sister. Thus Philip V., whose religious views would not allow him, like Louis XIV. and other kings, to entertain a female favourite at the same time as a wife, sent away his nurse's daughter and proceeded in state to meet the spouse with whom he had been provided. He was horrified upon meeting her to find his bride quite so small—a mere child who ought to have been still in the

nursery and with whom there could be no question for years to come of anything but a marriage in name.

If the little girl Marie Louise was but a child in stature, from the very first meeting Philip V. found her to be a terrible little creature for volubility ; moreover a mass of policy, ruse, and cunning. She had been well primed on leaving him in his Piedmontese palace in Turin by her father, Victor Amadeus II., who was the shiftiest and most unstable Prince of his day—one ever ready to sell himself to the highest bidder. Whether it were Austria or France whose interests he served, and whom he helped with his arms, mattered nothing to the Duke of Savoy, so that he was well enough paid.

His precocious daughter astounded her virile husband upon their first meeting at Figuières in the latter part of the year 1701. In an unceasing flow of words she attacked him with political conditions, while insisting that from her father alone was Philip V. in future to receive guidance in all matters.

Notwithstanding that he thus found in his child-wife a young political demon, one moreover inclined to give way to fits of uncontrolled temper, the French Prince, having the fear of Louis XIV. before his eyes, was not at first at all inclined to yield to her ceaseless tongue or to promise anything. He put up with her insolence, but relied on

France, not Savoy, for his policy, and during the next two years fully made up his mind to procure the annulment of this marriage which was no marriage.

Such a divorce, however, was not to be allowed, for Godet, Bishop of Chartres, and Madame de Maintenon, between them found out that it would too greatly offend Marie Adélaïde, Duchesse de Bourgogne. Philip V. was advised, therefore, that he was to worry no longer about being the husband of a child, for that in time she would become a woman.

The War of the Spanish Succession having broken out, Philip V. in command of a Spanish contingent joined that warrior descendant of Henri IV. and Gabrielle d'Estrées, the Duc de Vendôme, who commanded the French, and passed into Italy to fight against Prince Eugène and the Austrians. To this son of Olympià Mancini, Philip's father-in-law of Savoy had now sold himself, against the interests of the husbands of both his daughters. Vendôme, however, managed to thrash Eugène and the Imperial troops in two battles. While Philip was away at the war, his wife was left in the charge of a designing and immoral Frenchwoman, the Princesse des Ursins, who practically ruled Spain during his absence with her French lover d'Aubigny, whom she had turned into a Spanish Don.

Working in her father's interests, the little Queen

Marie Louise now wrote wild appeals to her husband to return to Spain. Philip foolishly left his command in Italy, whereupon his father-in-law, Victor Amadeus, openly joined the combined forces of England and Austria.

In Paris in the meanwhile the Duchesse de Bourgogne had contrived to compromise herself with a pack of lovers. A letter from one of these, M. de Maulévrier by name, fell into the hands of the Marquise de Maintenon, who had words with Marie Adélaïde which resulted in the dispatch of Maulévrier into Spain. Upon arrival at Madrid, this foolish young man soon declared himself the ardent adorer of the sister of his late inamorata, the young Queen not being yet fifteen years old. As a result of his passion for Marie Louise, Maulévrier threw himself from the palace windows and broke his worthless neck just before the return of Philip V.

This Prince after having met his young wife again fell in love with her himself, when she treated him shamefully, her thoughts running upon nothing but political affairs and money. As immodest as her sister de Bourgogne, the now fifteen-year-old Queen of Spain, in order to surprise a political conversation of the French Ambassador with de Louville, who had accompanied Philip V. from France, did not even scruple to rush into the room where they were talking, while wearing merely her chemise, which was cut very low, and a short petticoat. Thus attired, Marie Louise upbraided

de Louville like a little fish-wife in most unmeasured terms. The violence of this young virago increasing daily, she soon quite dominated her husband, while leading him a dog's life and preventing him from following his usual pursuits of hunting and card-playing. Upon one occasion, according to de Louville, the Queen attacked her husband with her fists when in bed, drove him from his couch and left him to shiver all night long in an armchair. There the chronicler found the King in the morning, sadly bemoaning the lot that had united him to such a she-devil. For fifteen years of married life Philip V. was compelled to put up with the vagaries of this Princess of Savoy, who, among other peculiarities, was never so happy as when witnessing the awful *autos-da-fé* of the victims of the Inquisition. To these horrible spectacles she dragged her hen-pecked husband, who abhorred them, but had not the moral courage to refuse to accompany his wife to see men and women burned alive and tortured. When death at length deprived him of his Queen, who died at the age of twenty-seven, Philip V. at last breathed freely. He was, however, to be fated to espouse another wife from Italy, one who took as much pleasure in seeing people burned alive as had her predecessor Marie Louise. Thus it happened that, in the course of his reign of forty-six years, this unfortunate and gentle-minded French Prince was compelled to be present at no less than seven hundred and eighty-



two *autos-da-fé*, during which he witnessed the burning alive and torturing of twenty-eight thousand human beings on account of their religious convictions. Such were still the horrors of Spain in the eighteenth century!

While Marie Louise was disporting herself thus gaily at Madrid, the Duchesse de Bourgogne at Versailles continued to horrify Madame de Maintenon but delight the King with her gross vulgarities.

The courtiers following her example in certain repulsive ways, there is no period of French history when the habits of the Court were so coarse. And yet Versailles had become the dullest place in the world, where, in the face of the misfortunes daily occurring to the French arms in the field, the once gay Louis XIV. was rarely seen to smile save when delighted by the wild vagaries of Marie Adélaïde.

Nor was the old King the only one to be amused by the Duchesse de Bourgogne, for her father-in-law Louis the Dauphin, who remained a boy in his feelings until he died at fifty, was frequently to be seen sharing in her pranks.

These not infrequently took the shape of practical jokes, played by the exuberant Princess upon some of the ladies who had been placed about her as spies by Madame de Maintenon. One of these, in which the Dauphin aided and abetted the Duchesse de Bourgogne, is worthy of mention if merely as a





MARIE-ADÉLAÏDE DE SAVOIE

From a Painting at Versailles



sample. An old friend of the Marquise, and as such distasteful to Marie Adélaïde, was the Princesse d'Harcourt. Upon one occasion in the winter time when the Court was at Marly, the Dauphin and his giddy daughter-in-law visited this lady in her bedroom at midnight and filled her bed with snow, from the effects of which she nearly died. While behaving continually in this foolish manner, the Duchesse de Bourgogne was nevertheless constantly a traitor to Louis XIV. For, having won over a spy of Madame de Maintenon's named the Princesse d'Espinoy, she communicated all the French secrets to her father Victor Amadeus, and through him to Prince Eugène.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### End of Marie Adélaïde and Madame de Maintenon

DURING the War of the Spanish Succession, France found opposed to herself and Spain armies of English, Dutch, Hanoverians, Danish, Wurtembergers, and Austrians. To these were added the forces of Victor Amadeus of Savoy, after that Prince had ratted and joined the enemies of his daughters' husbands. This defection of the Savoyards caused considerable trouble to that gluttonous bon-vivant and generally jolly good fellow Louis Joseph, Duc de Vendôme.

The mother of this great-grandson of Henri de Navarre was Laura Mancini. As the great Prince Eugène to whom he found himself constantly opposed was the son of Olympia Mancini, the two commanders for ever flying at each other's throats in Italy were, therefore, first cousins.

Vendôme was facing his cousin Eugène of Savoy when Victor Amadeus changed sides, at which time a large part of his army was composed of gallant soldiers of Savoy who had received the

instructions of their Duke to desert their commander. It was only with considerable difficulty and some bloodshed that Vendôme then succeeded in disarming his Savoyards before allowing them to depart to join the enemy.

Glutton though he was, drunk, moreover, half his time, the puffy-faced, fat-bodied Vendôme, who went by the nickname of “Cupidon,” was a very gallant and wide-awake soldier. Wearing a huge plume of white feathers on his head, in imitation of his ancestor Henri de Navarre, after waking up from some drunken orgie he would ever be seen charging into the midst of his foes where the battle was raging fiercest. Beloved of his ill-paid men, whom he allowed to pay themselves by plunder, Vendôme, however, possessed little knowledge of strategy; the thrashings which he occasionally administered to his cousin Eugène being usually the result of sheer bravery on his own part and that of those who fearlessly followed him to death or glory. He was always ready. In the year 1705, when Eugène thought to catch his cousin napping by a night attack at Cassano, Vendôme soon showed the Imperialists how easily he could recover from his midnight debauches by a counter-attack, which proved most successful, and astonished the Austrians, who lost half their men.

Five years later Cupidon was commanding a French army in Spain. There the English, who had a few years earlier (1704) taken Gibraltar,

were fighting side by side with the Austrians to place the Archduke Charles on the throne. These were successful. Thus Philip V. had fled from Madrid, and Charles had been proclaimed as Carlos III., when suddenly Vendôme swooped down to the rescue. He drove the English at Brihuega into a town, where they were glad to shut themselves up, and then, dashing onwards next day, surprised the Archduke, and gave the so-called Carlos III. such a drubbing that there was never any more question as to who was the King of Spain, the Crown remaining with Philip V., on whose behalf the Duc d'Orléans, the nephew of Louis XIV., had also been fighting most gallantly.

While the question of the Spanish Succession was settled thus by Vendôme in Spain, by the nominee of the Duchesse de Bourgogne retaining his throne, elsewhere Louis XIV. was still but too bitterly experiencing how heavy had been the chain which that young Princess had cast around his neck.

Although at Hochstadt the Maréchal-Duc de Villars gained a splendid victory for France in 1703, in the following year Eugène and Marlborough won the bloody battle of Blenheim on almost the same ground, crushing France for the time being, and leaving her open to invasion. The French, however, fought once more under Villars and Boufflers with the courage of despair at Malplaquet, where, although defeated, they inflicted more



loss upon the Dutch, English, and Austrians than they suffered themselves.

After this battle Louis was compelled to beg for a peace, which was not granted him. When Marlborough and Eugène sent and ordered the Grand Monarque to attack and drive out his grandson Philip V. if he would have peace, Louis made a show of boldness by demanding another Crown for Philip, that of the two Sicilies, instead of Spain. With what joy, then, must Eugène—the son of the King's once mistress Olympia—the man who had been refused with disdain a commission in the French army—have sent the Austrian reply: "If you want another Crown for your grandson, make him King of Franche-Comté, which Province you yourself stole from Spain!"

After Cupidon had been removed from the command of the army of Italy he was succeeded by a braggart noble, the Duc de la Feuillade, celebrated more as a ladies' man than a commander of armies. Yet when he found himself attempting to reduce Victor Amadeus, with whom was his relative Eugène, in Turin, his Piedmontese capital, Feuillade was foolish enough to refuse the assistance of the great engineer Vauban, who offered to bombard the place into submission.

During the siege Feuillade had associated with him a Prince of the Blood, who was quite a good soldier, and gave excellent advice. This was Philippe, Duc d'Orléans, soon to become Re-

gent. Another General present, and one with a good record, was the Maréchal de Marsin. The women at Versailles, however, spoiled the campaign for France by their manœuvres. While the Duchesse de Bourgogne was in constant communication with her father, sending him all the French plans, Madame de Maintenon was also responsible for the repeated defeats suffered by de la Feuillade. This spiteful old woman hated and was jealous of the Duc d'Orléans—the King's rollicking, good-natured nephew. For fear lest this Prince should meet with any measure of success, the Marquise sent instructions to Marsin to give such counsels as would be least likely to prove dangerous to the Duke of Savoy. The result was fatal to the unfortunate Marsin, who was killed, while de la Feuillade, having been obliged to spike his guns before Turin, was bundled out of Italy in dire confusion, and with terrible losses.

While the eternal war continued to drain France of the life-blood of its best and bravest, Versailles, in the absence of all the young nobles with the armies, remained as dull as ditch-water.

The only lively person at the Court was the Duchesse de Bourgogne, and all that the women had to think about was how to dress their hair in the style prescribed for them by the Marquise de Maintenon.

This good dame, now some seventy years old, imagined it becoming to wear her hair piled up

over her head on a network of wires two feet in height. As this erection trembled and wobbled continually, the result was ludicrous in the extreme. To this uncomfortable fashion, however, for upwards of fifteen years, the wives and daughters of the nobles were compelled to conform. The King detested this manner of dressing the hair, but in certain matters the Marquise was more powerful than Louis XIV. The dresses of the ladies meanwhile were gorgeous, of rich brocades and gold embroidery. The corsets were worn very straight, and the skirts of these heavy materials almost as tight as those of the early part of the twentieth century.

Their dress being so uncomfortable, and easy arm-chairs and sofas not yet having come into vogue, the Duchesse de Bourgogne and the other ladies at Versailles took to passing the greater part of their day in bed.

Dressed up in pretty frilly and be-ribboned night attire, it was in bed that they received their visitors, often only rising in the evening.

In the year 1711 the importance of Marie Adélaïde became greatly increased. Her father-in-law, the Dauphin, dying suddenly, her husband became heir to the throne, and she herself "Madame la Dauphine."

For a period of less than eighteen months did the ever-lively Savoyard Princess enjoy her elevation, and during that time the bigoted Duc de Bourgogne shared the rule of his grandfather the King, which

had now degenerated into little else than a cruel persecution of the Jansenists. (They were the Catholics who believed in the right of man to salvation without the Papal permission being required,) and their leader in France was de Noailles, the Archbishop of Paris.

At the end of this short period the new Dauphin and Dauphine both fell ill of typhoid fever, and, to the intense grief of the Court, both died in a few days.

While the Court mourned the loss of Marie Adélaïde, the fearful war of which she had been the cause came to an end between France and England, but continued between France and Austria.

The subject of the war had, however, long ceased to interest at Versailles, except in so far as it affected the pockets of those who had been forced to subscribe to help to pay its expenses.

A matter of far greater interest was the rumour which Madame de Maintenon assisted to spread. This was that the Duc d'Orléans had poisoned the Duc and Duchess de Bourgogne. The object of the Marquise in thus endeavouring, and with success, to discredit the King's nephew, was that she wished to get him out of the path of her former favourite pupil, the Duc du Maine, the King's eldest son by the Marquise de Montespan.

Maintenon and Maine had always worked hand in hand, the Duc having even been heartless enough, at the bidding of his governess, to request his mother to remove herself from the Court after the King had

quite abandoned her. Now Madame de Maintenon knew that when the King's death should occur, a very great number would be greatly displeased at the appointment by the King in his will of the illegitimate Duc du Maine to a position belonging by right to the Duc d'Orléans. This was to the post of Regent of the Kingdom and guardian of the infant heir to the throne, Louis, the son left by the Duc and Duchesse de Bourgogne. The Marquise hoped, indeed, that this baby boy, who was sickly, would die, and that Louis Auguste de Bourbon, as Maine was named, would be able to seize upon the throne, which would legally devolve upon Philippe d'Orléans.

As the boy did not die, however, the Marquise de Maintenon, as also the King himself, did all in her power to make it impossible for the King's nephew ever to assume his proper place. The easiest mode of ruining him with the public she found to be to say that he had poisoned the popular Duchesse de Bourgogne. The only excuse for this calumny was that the Duc d'Orléans was fond of the study of chemistry. It was, however, largely believed in, with the result that, while many nobles of the Court shunned d'Orléans, the crowd hooted him at the funeral of the Prince and Princess.

At length, in the last days of August 1715, Louis XIV. was dying, universally hated, after a reign of seventy-two years. After partaking of the last Sacrament, he sent for his good-natured nephew and deceived him with a lie. This was that he



assured Philippe that there would be found nothing in his will to his prejudice, whereas Louis had just executed a codicil putting all the power into the hands of his unlawful son, the Duc du Maine, whose sister, the Duchesse d'Orléans, was in the conspiracy to deceive her husband.

While Madame de Maintenon deserted the King for several days, during which he was looked upon as dead already, the Maine faction prepared to make use of an army under the Duc de Villeroi which Louis XIV. had put at the disposal of the Duc du Maine in order that he might seize d'Orléans and overawe the Parliament.

Fortunately for the interests of that unsuspecting Prince, Philippe d'Orléans, Louis XIV. lingered for several days, during which period the Duc de Saint-Simon had time to enlighten him, and to encourage the easy-going nephew of the King to get ready to assert himself. When Louis died, therefore, upon September 1, 1715, greatly to the astonishment of the Duc du Maine and Madame de Maintenon nearly all of the armed force in Paris, and likewise the Parliament, turned their backs upon the son of the Marquise de Montespan and supported the Duc d'Orléans, who became Regent of France.

The disappointed Madame de Maintenon now retired to her institution of Saint-Cyr, of which she had already pitilessly forced all the young inmates and their instructresses to take the veil. She died there, in her eighty-fourth year, in 1719.



## CHAPTER XIX

### Madame de Tencin and Mademoiselle Aïssé

WITH the disappearance from the scene of Louis XIV. and Madame de Maintenon, and the installation of Philippe d'Orléans as Regent and practical Monarch, the Court of France assumed a new aspect. Whereas during the later days of the Grand Monarque the all too prevalent vice in high places had been clothed with a pretence of decency, with the advent of the Regency decency was thrown to the winds. The licence which had been indulged in latterly more or less in secret at Versailles had been none the less licence on that account, its concealment being merely the outcome of hypocrisy. Yet it had not so openly shocked the decent-living as the wild liberty of Louis XIV. and his courtiers in earlier times, the open adultery of the King himself.

When the King's successor, the Regent, stepped into his shoes, at the end of 1715, the mask of hypocrisy and the cloak of restraint were alike thrown aside, while, from the ruler of the State

downwards, every man and woman behaved as he or she thought fit, regardless of the opinions of others.

At the time of the accession of Philippe d'Orléans to the Regency, his mother, the memoir-writing and scandal-loving Elizabeth Charlotte of Bavaria, was yet alive. A fearless, outspoken old lady, who had never been daunted by any risk of poisoning like her predecessor Madame Henriette by the Chevalier de Lorraine, the second Madame had nevertheless failed to see that her son was brought up properly. She had allowed her detestable husband to supply the naturally generous-minded Prince with a man of the most grovelling and depraved character as Preceptor. From this atheistical insect, the Abbé Dubois, Philippe from boyhood learned nought but what was bad, and the more so as Dubois, being naturally clever and calculating, himself became the pander to his pupil's early vices.

When the Duc d'Orléans became Regent, Dubois reaped his reward from the man whose moral nature he had poisoned in youth, who employed him in a position equivalent to that of First Minister. While Dubois then showed marked ability, especially in the new policy which he instituted of friendship with England and Austria, he never ceased to be a vile reptile and the butt of the Regent and his favourite courtiers, known as the "roués." While recompensing his services highly, the Regent treated his former Preceptor like a dog. When the atheistical

Dubois, after going through all the religious orders in one and the same day, had made himself Archbishop of Cambrai, he gave himself airs.

To correct these, the Duc d'Orléans hustled his Minister into a corner. He then gave Dubois a kick for being Minister of State, a second for being a pimp, a third as a rascal, a fourth as a priest, and a fifth for being Archbishop-Prince of Cambrai. "I do not mind," remarked Dubois in the corner, with a touch of wit, "for all that I am now hoping for and expecting from you is a sixth kick behind, to be received in my capacity of Cardinal!"

This kick Dubois probably received in due course, when, after spending millions in pursuit of the Cardinal's hat, he eventually obtained it from a Pope whose elevation to the Papacy he had himself helped to procure.

Without virtue or religion, perhaps the greatest crime of the selfish wretch who became Cardinal Dubois was that of having deliberately debauched and made an atheist of a Prince naturally of a good and generous disposition. Having perverted his pupil's mind in his earliest years, by the use of vile women such as Madame de Tencin as his instruments, Dubois never subsequently neglected any opportunity of increasing the corruption which he had himself instilled into the Regent's mind.

Corrupt as was the Regent morally, that he was a man with a heart he showed as soon as he commenced to rule. By every possible effort, he then

attempted to alleviate the sufferings of the starving poor in the country which Louis XIV. had left bankrupt. Moreover this utterly irreligious Prince made a bold stand against the violent members of the Church in favour of the tortured Protestants. Famous for the wild orgies in which he indulged nightly with his *roués* and selected favourites from among the ladies both of the Court and of the stage, Philippe d'Orléans is none the less famous for having been the first really humane Prince who ruled France after the time of Henri IV.

Generous to a fault, he applauded and rewarded his enemies when, like Voltaire on the stage, they openly vilified him. The chief difficulty, even in the case of such bitter enemies as the Duc and Duchesse du Maine and his cousin Philip V. of Spain, was to make the Regent believe that they really sought to work him evil by every means in their power. Rather than retaliate, for long the inclination of Philippe d'Orléans was to let these Princes stir up the Kingdom against him as they chose, while merely laughing good-naturedly at their manœuvres.

Unfortunately, however, the faults in the Regent's moral character were so great as almost to counter-balance his good qualities. Further, they were shared in, if not exceeded by, his unprincipled daughters, notably the eldest girl Marie Louise, who was a veritable Messalina and developed a guilty passion for her father, which he reciprocated

without concealment. Married at an early age to her cousin the Duc de Berry, by which young Prince she was very soon left a widow, from her earliest years the conduct of the beautiful Marie Louise d'Orléans had been more than light. Her mother, “Madame Satan,” an illegitimate daughter of Louis XIV. and Madame de Montespan, and sister of the Duc du Maine, seems to have been utterly regardless of the morals of her daughters, and therefore, if for no other reason, well worthy of the soubriquet bestowed upon her by her husband.

If ever the behaviour of those in high places were such as to conduce to the general upheaval of a society wearied out with ill-doing, such may truthfully be said to have been that of the Princes and Princesses of France of the time of the Regency. If before the days of Louis XIV. France was already crawling towards the Revolution, from the time of his death the country may be said to have been whipped up to a gallop in that direction by the conduct of the members of those of the Blood-Royal.

One of the leading coachmen was undoubtedly Marie Louise d'Orléans, a young Princess who before long, through her hold upon her father's affections, assumed the position of Queen of France.

Having gone at length into the history of the Duchesse de Berry elsewhere (*The Regent of the Roués*), we prefer in this work to leave aside the unsavoury details of her life until she died tragically at the age of twenty-four.



A woman who early came into notoriety was the Madame de Tencin mentioned above. She was unmarried but, according to the custom of the day, called Madame from holding the position of Chanoinesse or Canoness. This Madame de Tencin was a nun at Grenoble, young and beautiful, when, through the influence of the powerful priest with whom she was too familiar, she was absolved from her vows. Then with her brother the intriguing Abbé de Tencin she came to Paris, where the life that they openly led more resembled that of husband and wife than of brother and sister. Intriguing herself, Madame de Tencin contrived to worm herself into the Regent's Court and to become accepted as one of the women invited to his suppers. In one respect however, she failed, as she excited a repulsion in the Regent's open nature rather than the attraction which she desired. While therefore being allowed to exercise her doubtful talents and inventive faculties to amuse the Duc d'Orléans and his debauched associates, that Prince absolutely refused to accept the unprincipled Madame de Tencin as one of the favourites of his harem.

Failing with the Regent, after having made herself fashionable by becoming one of those myriads of women to whom that celebrated rake the Duc de Richelieu threw his handkerchief, Madame de Tencin formed a liaison with an artillery officer who was also a great poet. His name was Destouches, and it was owing to this connection that the world





MADAME DE TENCIN



became the richer by a famous genius. For Madame de Tencin became the mother of a little boy, whom she barbarously deserted by night upon the steps of a church. This boy, being adopted by a poor woman as her son, became the celebrated mathematician and man of letters d'Alembert, one of the compilers of the celebrated *Encyclopédie*, the appearance of which work revolutionised modern science.

When in later years la Tencin sought out the now famous d'Alembert, that brilliant man turned his back with repulsion upon his inhuman mother.

Long before that period this siren, failing the Regent, had showered her affections upon and swindled various famous men, one of whom, Lord Bolingbroke, was the principal agent for the elder Pretender in France. She likewise, as a means of filling her pockets, contrived to captivate the sixty-year-old Dubois, who, greatly to the amusement of the profligate Duc d'Orléans, proudly produced Madame de Tencin at Court as his conquest and lady love. With Dubois she was associated in many shady schemes through which she hoped to tap the funds of the State money chest, but as a rule merely succeeded in tapping that disreputable prelate's well-lined pockets.

Nor was she successful when, having been well paid by her Jesuit friends, she sought to supply the Regent with a favourite through whom it was hoped that this tolerant ruler would be brought to persecute the Jansenists, who were the peculiar object of the

Jesuits' hatred. The young lady in question, one of great beauty and charming manners, was by birth a Circassian, and her most interesting history was as follows :

There was a Comte de Fériol, who was for many years the French Ambassador at Constantinople, where, being a bachelor, he adopted Oriental customs and kept a well-filled seraglio. After some Turkish war, the Sultan's troops brought back and exposed for sale a lovely little girl, who was said to be the daughter of a Circassian King.

This little girl, whose name was Ayesha, was bought by the Comte for a large sum, when he determined to have her educated and brought up to become his mistress later. Before she was five years old, accordingly, the Circassian Ayesha was placed in Paris, in the house of his brother the President de Fériol. Madame de Fériol, being the sister of Madame de Tencin, had no scruples, and, as she and her husband hoped one day to inherit the Comte's great riches, agreed readily to the immoral proposals made to her, to bring Ayesha up with her own sons and daughters, of whom one son was the Comte d'Argental.

The girl in Paris, having had her name transformed into Mademoiselle Aïssé, was sent to the Convent of the Nouvelles Catholiques and carefully trained under Fénelon. As she began to develop, Madame de Fériol, fearful of offending her brother-in-law, was careful to nip in the bud a growing

affection which she noticed in her son d'Argental for the girl, the youth being instructed never to regard Aïssé in any other light than that of a sister.

By the time that the young Circassian was seventeen she had become more than usually attractive, her beautiful Oriental eyes and graceful, willowy form serving to enhance her natural charm and sweet disposition.

Now it was that the Comte de Fériol wrote that he was about to return to France to claim his slave girl, whom he had never forgotten and for whose support and training in his brother's household he had paid on a very liberal scale.

Thereupon Madame de Fériol, her adopted mother, informed Aïssé, who had hitherto considered herself as free as any other young lady, of her proposed fate—told her that she was merely a slave girl who had been brought up to serve as the instrument of the pleasures of an old debauchee—one who in habits was half a Turk !

After weeping her eyes out for a time at her foster-mother's knees, the lovely Aïssé wrote to her owner to implore his mercy. The answer of the Comte de Fériol was brutally frank : "When I bought you, I reckoned upon profiting by destiny, and to make of you my daughter or my mistress. The same destiny wills that you should become both the one and the other."

When the Ambassador arrived at his brother's

house shortly after his letter, Mademoiselle Aïssé, knowing him to be her absolute owner and that resistance was futile, surrendered herself to his arms with Oriental resignation. Nor did she prove unhappy, for such was the kindness of her master to her that she learned to love the Comte de Fériol, and remained strictly faithful to him in spite of the many temptations by which the unprincipled nobles of the Court sought to seduce her affections. The love of Aïssé for the old nobleman seems indeed to have combined the purity of the daughter with the submissiveness of the young Eastern woman, and when the Comte became ill Aïssé nursed him tenderly until he recovered his health.

It was after for six years Aïssé had thus proved herself the devoted mistress of the Comte de Fériol, that his sister-in-law and Madame de Tencin ventured to indulge in a dream by which the Comte's happiness was to be destroyed for him in his old age. This was to give Mademoiselle Aïssé to the Regent, not merely as an ordinary paramour, but as one who was to supersede all others if possible, by obtaining over him that sway which no woman save his daughter the Duchesse de Berry had ever yet obtained.

With Madame de Tencin and her miserable sister Dubois was associated in the plot, for the Prince-Archbishop of Cambrai was at that moment particularly anxious for the assistance of the Jesuits in his schemes to obtain the longed-for Cardinal's hat.



To follow to its conclusion in detail the plot of the conspirators is unnecessary. Suffice it to say that when the all-unsuspecting Aïssé, who was then aged twenty-four, had been deliberately left by the two designing women alone in the company of the ruler of France, she was horrified at his proposals.

Whatever his faults, Philippe d'Orléans was a gentleman. When he found that the beautiful Circassian had not, as he had been led to believe, come to him of her own free will, he apologised for his advances, while telling her that he highly respected her virtue.

Not long after this adventure the Comte de Fériol died, leaving to Aïssé much money. Most of this she generously gave up without reserve to Madame de Fériol, the woman whose sole object had been to accomplish her ruin.

Later she refused to marry a noble named the Chevalier d'Aydie, who had been in love with her for eleven years, giving as a reason for refusing him that the circumstances of her previous life made her unworthy to become the wife of an honest gentleman. Yielding, however, to the almost broken-hearted Chevalier's importunities, she consented, although with regret, to share his life, but not as his wife.

By him she became the mother of a girl, who was brought up in England, to which country Aïssé had retired, under the name of Miss Black. Having left her daughter in a convent, Mademoiselle Aïssé

returned to Paris, where she died, greatly beloved by her adopted brother the Comte d'Argental, Lord Bolingbroke, and others. When she expired in her fortieth year, Aïssé left behind her charmingly written memoirs of her day, which Voltaire considered masterpieces of French writing.

## CHAPTER XX

### The Marquise de Prie

HAVING failed in her design to foist the virtuous-minded Aïssé upon Philippe d'Orléans, during the remainder of that Prince's career as ruler Madame de Tencin had to content herself with being the mistress of the ceremonies of his nightly orgies. To render these horrible debauches the more entertaining, the ex-Canoness Tencin is said to have consulted many classical books of obscenity, and to have reproduced all the ancient voluptuous rites at the Palais-Royal or at Saint-Cloud. For it was only during the last year or two of his life that the Regent removed the young King to Versailles and resided there himself also. Although her brother the Abbé de Tencin was a man of more than doubtful reputation, having made a woman of the world of his sister the nun, he had likewise acquired the reputation of considerable capacity in the art of negotiating difficult matters. He thus became indispensable to Dubois, who employed him constantly in his negotiations for the Cardinal's hat. Tencin it was eventually who, by employing a kind of blackmail, bounced

Pope Innocent XIII. (formerly Cardinal Conti) into yielding the hat to the Atheist Dubois in the year 1721. The Abbé, by the use of threats and a signed paper written by Innocent when a Cardinal which he held, then nearly frightened the Pope into giving him a hat likewise. The old Pope made, however, such a vigorous resistance to the man whose infamous relations with his sister were world-known, that Tencin failed notwithstanding his importunities. Innocent XIII. died, however, in a year or two, when the Abbé de Tencin was, by some nefarious arrangement, clever enough to procure for himself the scarlet hat and purple mantle from his successor, Benedict XIII.

In the meantime at the Court of the Regent, if Madame de Tencin had failed in her efforts, which were prompted by the Jesuits, to rule the Regent through a woman, neither was any other woman ever successful in obtaining sufficient importance at his Court to affect State concerns.

For although he changed his mistresses frequently, although the changes were often only for a time, and the easy-going Regent always remained on very friendly terms with all of the women who shared his favours, even when they were unfaithful to him, in one matter this prodigal Prince showed his wisdom. He kept all of his women, to whatever class they might belong, including those of his own family, entirely without the scope of the political arena. Moreover, the finances of the State never

had to suffer owing to the Regent allowing any of the amiable ladies with whom he associated to dip their pretty fingers into the governmental money-chest. When they required money he gave freely, but from his own pocket. The same rule obtained concerning those witty, dissolute companions to whom the Regent gave the name of his "roués," because, he said, they were only fit to be broken on the wheel (*la roue*).

He gave to them largely, because his nature was generous and he loved giving, but not from the State funds. Some there were, however, to whom the State coffers had to be left unfastened, and these were the Regent's own near relatives of the Houses of Condé and Conti. During the time that the Duc d'Orléans employed the clever Scotsman John Law to run the State Bank in combination with the celebrated Mississippi Company, all France went wild with gambling, and the shares of Law's concerns often rose to fabulous heights.

The Princes of Condé and Conti then insisted upon having from the Regent the political secrets to make the shares rise; they bought shares for the rise and then converted their paper money into gold to the extent of many millions, which they drove off from the Banque Royale in long strings of waggons. Behind the young Prince de Condé, who was always known as the Duc de Bourbon, or simply "M. le Duc," were two women of no character. His mother the Duchesse de Bourbon, a daughter of Louis XIV. and

the Marquise de Montespan (and thus the Regent's sister-in-law), was one, and the other, quite a young lady, the Duc's mistress the insatiable Marquise de Prie. She ruled all of the Condés, including the Prince's scandalous sisters Mademoiselle de Charolais and Mademoiselle de Clermont.

The hold that the Condé and Conti faction held over the good-natured Regent, and owing to which he was obliged to allow them to rob the State during the whole of the time of Law as Controller-General, and later when, Law's enemy, Pâris-Duverney held the reins, was a very tight one indeed. It was the threat to join the Duc and Duchesse du Maine—the Duchesse being a Condé—in their endless manœuvres in conjunction with Philip V. of Spain against the Regent's authority. To purchase the alliance of Condé against Spain and the Maines' seditious Court at Sceaux, Philippe d'Orléans was practically forced to allow the Princes of the Blood who after himself were next to the throne to have a free hand. The mother of the Prince de Conti was, like the mother of Condé, an illegitimate daughter of Louis XIV., her mother having been Louise de la Vallière ; the Condés were, however, one step nearer to the throne than their cousins the Contis, and thus the Duc de Bourbon had the more power to coerce the Regent. Meanwhile the hand which unceasingly employed that of M. le Duc to dig for her in the State money box was that of Madame de Prie.

Her hand was to become likewise practically that



of the ruler of France for a year or two after the sudden death of Philippe d'Orléans, upon the shoulder of Madame de Falari on December 2, 1723; it is therefore necessary to relate what is known concerning the rise to power of this young lady.

An army contractor named Pléneuf, having made France too hot for himself by his speculations, deserted his plump and remarkably handsome wife in Paris, and ran off with his very young and pretty daughter to Turin, the Piedmontese capital of the Dukes of Savoy, where Victor Amadeus now ruled with the title of King of Sardinia. Here the girl was soon initiated into all sorts of Italian graces and vices, but not taught to cultivate any softness of heart. While Madame Pléneuf in Paris found herself compelled to live by a species of prostitution, a coterie of celebrated men all becoming at the same time her lovers and each other's friends, among whom jealousy was unheard of, her daughter in Turin no less immorally contrived to catch and marry the French Ambassador, the Marquis de Prie. He was poor, and the young siren, having procured a title from the Marquis, for whom she cared nothing, determined next to procure money.

Her first manœuvres, upon her return to Paris after her marriage, consisted in endeavouring to supplant her own mother with the wealthy group of nobles who supplied her with the means of living. When these gentlemen refused to be seduced from their allegiance by the immoral Marquise, pre-

ferring the mother's frank, open nature, the daughter took every step in her power to procure her mother's ruin. To describe her manœuvres were needless, suffice it to say they were continuous. It happened that a certain Madame de Verrue, a lady of the ducal family of Luynes with a speculative nature, who for a time had practically ruled Savoy through its Duke, had fled from Turin to Paris to escape the jealousies of Victor Amadeus. Her house in Paris was famous for its picture galleries, and chiefly for her collections of Rubens and Rembrandt, whose pictures Madame de Verrue first made fashionable in France.

Seeing the flower-like beauty of the youthful Marquise de Prie, and early recognising in the girl a depravity which equalled her own, Madame de Verrue determined to make use of her as a speculation to *exploiter* Louis, Prince de Condé, or as he was called, M. le Duc.

It was not that the Duc de Bourbon, in addition to a wife, was unprovided with another fair friend, for all the world was aware of the fact that by the Marquise de Nesle, granddaughter of Hortense Mancini, Duchesse de Mazarin, he had had two young daughters, one of whom had been legitimatised—of the other we shall hear later.

The Marquise de Nesle, whose husband was living, had already made herself notorious by getting herself shot in a duel which she had fought with Madame de Polignac. Wounded, and when lying

bleeding on the ground, she had then loudly proclaimed that she would "willingly shed the last drop of blood in her veins for the noblest man living, the Duc de Richelieu!" Yet after fighting for the possession of this fashionable rake, whom she could but share with half the ladies of Paris, Madame de Nesle had passed to the Prince de Condé. M. le Duc was now, however, tired of her charms, a fact of which Madame de Verrue was well aware when she set the blood-sucking Marquise de Prie upon his track.

During the course of three masked balls in succession, it was in vain that the Duc de Bourbon begged and implored a laughing lady who jested with him in a sparkling manner to remove her mask.

When, after her endless coquetries, the already enamoured Prince, who was not yet thirty years of age, contrived to see the lady's features, he was completely captivated with Madame de Prie.

Having shown her face, she did not make M. le Duc languish long, and with her possession riches came rolling in upon the Condés. For Madame de Prie understood both how to work the Regent and how to work John Law, the source of so much wealth, while M. le Duc and those of his princely family had but to do that which she prescribed to succeed beyond the most extravagant hopes. Thus it came to pass that the lovely Marquise de Prie became not merely accepted by the members of the Condé household,

but adopted by them, while she took up all their likes and hatreds as though she were actually Condé herself. While already becoming a power in the land, the Marquise was not more than about twenty years of age when, in 1720, came the fall of Law, which had been largely promoted by the folly of the Regent and Dubois and their creation, against his wishes, of an immensely exaggerated supply of bank-notes.

Madame de Prie and her princely lover were not, however, among those who suffered when the terrible crash came, for, perfectly unscrupulous as was the Marquise, she knew how to call to power and to work Law's bitter enemy, the financier Pâris-Duverney, a man who made and destroyed fortunes as he would by the "*visa*" which he was called upon to make of the whole of the recent gambling operations.

Thus it happened that while any compromising receipts given to Law by the Prince de Condé for a few millions at a time were burned, all of his outstanding notes, which had for others become merely worthless paper, were replaced in the Duc de Bourbon's pocket by honest gold coin of the realm.

The Marquise de Prie, who completely governed M. le Duc, while having attained boundless wealth, still remained ambitious, already seeking, at the age of twenty-two, to rule France through her lover. Before she was twenty-four she succeeded in so

doing, although, libertine as she was by nature, she was no more faithful to M. le Duc than she was to her own husband.

The way in which she gained the power was as follows :

The Preceptor of the child Louis XV., appointed in his dying moments by his great-grandfather Louis XIV., upon the request of his rabid Jesuit confessor Michel le Tellier, was Fleury, Bishop of Fréjus, a mild-mannered prelate.

Already an old man when appointed, Fleury was yet looking forward to the future, and for this reason carefully cultivated the disagreeable and unresponsive nature of the child Louis XV., succeeding in winning and keeping the boy's affection by indulging his worst instincts.

When the Regent died at the end of 1723, the Duc de Bourbon forestalled the Duc de Chartres, the new Duc d'Orléans, and rushed into the presence of the not yet fourteen-year-old King and his tutor. With the latter he had already come to terms, promising to leave all ecclesiastical preferment in his hands. When therefore Condé pulled a paper from his pocket appointing himself First Minister in place of the Regent deceased, and asked the boy-King to confirm it, Louis XV. merely looked to old Fleury for advice. "You can do no better, Sire," said the Bishop of Fréjus to the boy.

Thus M. le Duc, that is to say the Marquise de Prie, assumed the rule of France, for First Minister

was the title that the Regent had adopted after declaring the majority of Louis XV. at the age of thirteen, despite which assumed majority he himself had continued to rule the State. And to rule the State was what Prince Louis de Condé, Duc de Bourbon, now commenced to do, under the guidance of his fair young mistress.





MADemoiselle AÏSSÉ



## CHAPTER XXI

### Madame de Prie and Marie Lesczynska

THE son of an unprincipled and greatly dreaded Minister of Police, and the elder brother of another clever but unprincipled Minister, the Marquis René Louis de Voyer d'Argenson was the one noble who by his honesty of purpose shone out through the reign of Louis XV. His long and intimate Memoirs and his *Loisirs d'un Ministre* form delightful reading, and it is from them that we will quote the extracts dealing with Madame de Prie. After mentioning that he often met the Marquise de Prie at the house of her cousin Madame de G., a lady whose incognito he always preserves, the Marquis d'Argenson observes :

“ I do not think that there has ever existed a more celestial creature than Madame de Prie. She was the real flower of the sweet-pea. A charming face and even more graces than beauty, wit lively and acute, genius, ambition, giddiness, and nevertheless a supreme presence of mind, an extreme indifference in her choices, and with it all the most decent air in the world.

“Well, she governed France throughout two years, and one was able to judge her, but to say that she governed it well is another matter.

“At the depth there reigned the greatest disorder in her conduct, also she died partly from the results of her libertinage, partly from rage at seeing her credit overturned. During her prosperity she maintained an affection for each of her lovers, and did her best to be useful to them.

“I saw her intimately at the period of her great beauty. Her fascination was great, but, whether from prudence or from chance, I resisted it, and do not regret having done so, however much my conduct may have damaged me with her.

“Madame de Prie arrived ruined from the Embassy, and set at once about repairing her fortunes. She would not have succeeded badly had it not been for the extreme disorder in which she lived.

“M. le Duc was wildly taken with her. Mesdames de Verrue and de Saissac gave her to him. The bargain was soon made. I have known a good many of the details of this liaison and its origin. I knew their customs, their goings to the opera-balls, their grey chariot *de bonne fortune*, which had outwardly the appearance of a common *fiacre*, but was internally of an extreme magnificence. Madame de G. and I accompanied them everywhere, and I was proud to be seen walking about arm-in-arm with a Prince of the Blood.

“ Nevertheless I almost ceased to see him later on, and when he became First Minister. I am inclined, however, to think him an honest man, above all having the desire to be one, although for that matter restricted and narrow-minded.

“ M. le Duc became jealous of the Marquis d'Alincourt, the grandson of the Maréchal de Villeroi, and in consequence Madame de Prie had to give the Marquis his *congé*, but all that is very young and childish.

“ M. le Duc d'Orléans died and M. le Duc became First Minister, or rather he had only the title of it. La de Prie and Pâris-Duverney held him in bondage.

“ Madame de Prie did not like my brother ; she took away from him his post of Lieutenant de Police. At the same time I gave up my Intendancy of Valenciennes, which only ruined me without being good for anything. I was reproached for this step as a want of attachment to M. le Duc, and an occasion for making me feel it soon came. I had asked for an Intendancy, and there were two vacant. La de Prie cut me out, she preferred M. de Harlay, who had Strasbourg, and M. d'Angervilliers, who got Paris.

“ She procured M. le Duc Madame d'Egmont for his amusement as soon as she perceived that her own charms ceased to have the same empire over that Prince. In fact she was getting thin while one looked at her, her bones showed through the skin.

“She it was *who made the Queen, just as I would make of my lackey a valet de chambre*. That was a pity! Nevertheless her credit fell against M. de Fréjus (Bishop Fleury), whom she wished to separate from the King, but who sat tight and laughed at her. From disappointment she became hideous and haughty with every one, would listen to no reasonable advice.

“Seeing that I was becoming importunate, I seldom appeared before her; not that I feared her though, on account of our old acquaintance, and therefore did not neglect to tell her a few home truths when I saw her, at which she only laughed. She was disgraced at the same time as M. le Duc. Her husband M. de Prie then asked everybody, with a comic affectation, ‘But what have my wife and M. le Duc to do in common?’

“She died in the saddest manner at Courbe-Épine. I have seen M. le Duc from time to time since, but not with the old familiarity.

“Madame de Prie was absolutely determined to receive me alone. As for me, I avoided these interviews like another Joseph with Potiphar’s wife. Never was her door closed to me. One day when I went I was ushered in to her at her toilette—she was washing herself. I wished to retire but she made me remain.

“‘At all events, Madame,’ I then said, ‘let me take the first fruits of such cleanliness.’ As a matter of fact, I kissed her, and heartily too, although it



was but by chance that I found myself there. Fortunately some one came, for I really truly loved Madame de G., and it went against the grain that, from pure libertinage, her cousin should make advances to me, and fail towards M. le Duc, who was so good to her. She was uncommonly pretty then, although she had commenced to fine down. I went off on the morrow to Valenciennes, without taking advantage in any way of her good will towards me."

From the above intimate picture one is able to understand much more of the human side of the Marquise de Prie than could otherwise have been ascertained; to understand also much of the nature of the worthy d'Argenson who dotted down these details in the diaries which did not see the light until a century after the death of Madame de Prie.

Perhaps the first really important action of State performed by that young Marquise after her accession to power was to send back to Spain the young Infanta, a little girl who had been brought to Versailles by the late Regent and Dubois as the affianced bride of Louis XV.

The bringing to France of this daughter of Philip V. and his second Queen, the ever-restless Elizabeth Farnese, had been a sheer act of policy. For the child was so young that no marriage could possibly take place for many years to come. Thus Louis XV. must remain childless, and might

possibly die, leaving the Regent, his next of kin, his heir to the throne.

The Regent being dead, his son succeeded to his father's rights of succession to the Crown. Having already done the religious, indeed Jansenistically minded, Duc de Chartres out of the post of First Minister upon his father's death, Madame de Prie and M. le Duc resolved if possible to prevent him for ever from the opportunity of succeeding to the Kingdom.

The worthy couple therefore decided to marry the boy-King as soon as possible to some Princess of marriageable age by whom he might have children. First of all, however, careless of offending Spain, the Marquise de Prie sent the little Infanta back to Madrid, where the insult was so keenly resented that war almost ensued, although the disturbances died down after some Spanish incursions on the French frontier.

After clearing out from Versailles many old adherents of the Regent, and especially two of her mother's lovers, the Minister of War, Leblanc, and Fouquet's grandson, the war-like Comte de Belle-Isle, Madame de Prie set about finding a Queen for Louis XV. As a matter of form, she first of all made a show of being willing to give one of the younger sisters of M. le Duc to the young King. She would not have been averse to so doing, but did not care to commit herself to such an important step without first making the

personal acquaintance of Mademoiselle de Vermandois, the Princess in question, then in a convent at Tours. Sagely, Madame de Prie thought that she would go and see the girl, who was said to be handsome and haughty, and to sound her. Should she find, as was possible, that she was as well disposed towards herself as the rest of M. le Duc's family, she should become the Queen of France. If, on the other hand, she had in her convent been turned against her, then the Marquise determined to leave the youthful Princess in her obscurity.

It is evident that the Duc de Bourbon had his doubts of his young sister, since he furnished the Marquise with a letter of introduction to her in the assumed name of some other noble lady. With this letter Madame de Prie proceeded to the convent at Tours, where she readily gained access to Mademoiselle de Vermandois, who was delighted to have an opportunity of hearing all the latest gossip from Paris.

In person, Madame de Prie found the daughter of the Condés to be well formed; she was pretty, and her manner animated and lively. After she had chatted with her visitor for some time upon the most interesting topics of the day, the disguised Marquise took an opportunity of mentioning the name of Madame de Prie.

This name was to the convent-educated Princess like a red rag to a bull. She instantly caught

fire, and commenced to abuse her brother's *maîtresse en titre* in unmeasured terms. She could not find words hard enough for "the degraded woman" with whom the Duc de Bourbon had openly associated himself—a creature, forsooth, who pretended to govern France! Having started in this style Mademoiselle de Vermandois could not stop her tongue from going. For a time the Marquise listened with seeming approval, but as she heard herself designated by one vile term after another by this chit of a girl she felt herself getting angry, although she concealed her feelings. When at length the Princess wound up her tirade by saying that a dissolute woman like Madame de Prie ought to be stripped and publicly flogged the Marquise, whose cheeks were flaming, rose.

Madame de Prie only uttered one sentence, but it was quite sufficient to make the sister of M. le Duc wish that she had had the good sense to control her tongue better in the presence of an unknown lady.

"Va! tu ne seras point reine de France!"—  
(That will do! you shall never be Queen of France!)

With this Parthian shaft the Marquise retired, leaving Mademoiselle de Vermandois to her reflections.

After her return to Paris, Madame de Prie was clever enough to pretend that she had found the young lady all that could be required; but this was only so as to give the Duc de Bourbon the opportunity of telling every one that if the proposed

match with his sister was not to take place it was not in any way the fault of the Marquise.

In the meantime Madame de Prie and her crony the financier Pâris-Duverney had between them fixed upon another young lady as a possible bride for the King, one who, although she had some claims to Royalty, was the very last person in the world that any one would have thought of.

Soon, however, the energetic young lady who ruled the State started upon another self-imposed mission, and this time she took with her numberless presents of raiment, especially of dainty underwear, including great quantities of silk stockings. With her bales of gifts the enterprising Marquise travelled away to far-off Alsace, where she found the object of her quest with her father, who lived the life of a country gentleman upon the bounty supplied to him by the generosity of the late Duc d'Orléans.

He was the beggared but jovial ex-King of Poland, Stanislas Lesczynski, and his amiable daughter, a girl in her twenty-second year, Marie Lesczynska.

When the ex-King, who had undergone all sorts of hardships, and was worrying his life out about his daughter's future, understood from the beaming young Marquise that she had come to make that daughter the Queen of France, he swooned from joy upon the astounded Marie's neck. For recently Stanislas had been even anxious to give his daughter's hand to a Colonel d'Estrées, a gentleman of noble birth, when the only hitch had



been that the Regent had declined to raise the Colonel in the nobility by making him a Duc et Pair de France instead of merely a Comte.

When Madame de Prie proceeded next to display to Marie Lesczynska the treasures that she had brought her as presents from Paris, the girl nearly fainted in turn from emotion and surprise.

"Never in my life," she remarked in awe-struck tones, "have my eyes beheld so much riches!"

It was but natural that the young lady, whose life had been but one of trials since her father's flight from Poland twelve years before, and his long subsequent captivity, experienced none but the warmest feelings to one who came to her thus, offering gifts and a Royal Prince for a husband, like the fairy godmother of the story.

Marie Lesczynska, aged twenty-two, was taken to Paris to be married to Louis XV., who was just fifteen in September 1725. She was sweet-looking with a very good figure but not exactly handsome, while her husband was already remarkably good-looking and soon grew up to be the handsomest man in France.

At first the young King, who had been indulged in his nefarious pursuits by his Preceptor, old Fleury, left his wife severely alone, while leading a shameless existence with a pack of horrible young nobles and, the wife of one of them, the youthful Duchesse de Retz.

It had been in order to separate Louis from



this gang of scapegraces that the Regent had previously removed the boy-King to Versailles, while imprisoning the dissolute boys, his associates, in the Bastille, and banishing the immoral young Duchesse. After the death of Philippe d'Orléans the scandal had, however, re-commenced, when the Marquise de Prie became worthy of all praise by the efforts which she took, and with considerable success in spite of Fleury, to separate the King from his evil companions.

For a time the Queen was, however, left out in the cold, her sole associates being the Marquise de Prie and a dozen ladies, whom the Marquise had made every effort to select from those whose reputations were not too badly besmirched.

As the Regency had unfortunately favoured the most scandalous libertinage, we are not, however, surprised to learn from the chronicler Masillon that "one did not look too closely into the character of the twelve ladies of the Palace, for it would have been too difficult to fill these places with ladies of irreproachable manners." While neglected by the King, and surrounded by such lively ladies as the notorious Marquise de Nesles, Madame d'Egmont and Madame de Gontaut, the Queen, however, remained good and pure, and so she continued all her life. Moreover, when the Marquise and M. le Duc had by force removed and married off the King's worst associate, the Duc de la Trémoille, sent away likewise the girlish Duc de Gesvres, Marie Lesczynska had a short spell of

happiness with her boy-husband. Her first child, Madame Louise Élizabeth, was born in the year 1727, and she subsequently became the mother of one son, Louis the Dauphin, and five other daughters, Henriette, Adélaïde, Victoire, Sophie, and Louise Marie.

After the King's marriage, there soon developed a struggle for supremacy between M. le Duc and the Marquise de Prie, who remained the Queen's friends, and the intriguing old Fleury, who still kept Louis XV. completely under his thumb to such an extent that he was afraid to perform any action in a manly, straightforward way. By his intrigues Bishop Fleury contrived to cause the temporary retirement of the Marquise from the Court, but in her absence all went wrong. Then, without being summoned, that enterprising young lady returned to Versailles like a whirlwind, and once more carried everything with a high hand.

Eventually, in the middle of the year 1726, Fleury, who had made himself a Cardinal, triumphed. He allowed the King to retire to seek the society at Rambouillet of that elderly flirt, the Comtesse de Toulouse, while parting with his First Minister, M. le Duc, upon most affectionate terms. No sooner was the King safely away than, by a *lettre de cachet*, the Duc de Bourbon was deprived of his offices and banished to his seat at Chantilly. Madame de Prie was likewise exiled to her estate at Courbe-Épine (July 11, 1726).

## CHAPTER XXII

### Death of Madame de Prie

It has been the fashion to speak evilly of Madame de Prie, but, with all her faults, she seems really to have had at heart while in a position of authority only the good of the boy-King. Moreover, her ending was so sad that one can but pity this clever if misguided young woman, who after being so great died miserably at the age of twenty-seven.

When driven from the Court by the tactics of Fleury, this old prelate likewise showed the pettiness of his nature by the mean revenge which he took upon the protector of the Marquise, the Duc de Bourbon. In the terms of the banishment of this Prince to Chantilly, the young King was made to expressly forbid him from indulging in any kind of sport—whether with horses, hounds, or guns.

And yet, an ardent sportsman himself, M. le Duc, with the intention of weaning Louis XV. from his evil boy companions, had laid himself out to make a fellow sportsman of the King, and done so with considerable success, since the only healthy instincts

of Louis XV. subsequently were those of his out-of-door recreations.

Madame de Prie meanwhile was determined not to show so plainly as did M. le Duc how much she suffered from being compelled to lead an idle life after ruling the State. Accordingly she filled her house at Courbe-Épine with people, one of the principal of whom was the clever and spiteful-tongued Madame du Deffand, and, further, she openly took a new lover. This was a young noble who lived in her neighbourhood, one who declared that he would die with grief if she would not listen to his prayers. While pretending that she accepted the attentions of this gentleman from sheer pity, the pride of the Marquise was involved in her action—she determined to show her detractors at the Court that she was still sought after, still much thought of. The unhappy young lady had, however, determined to die upon a certain date. In her maddest moments of frivolity she would laughingly exclaim to the gay guests of her household: “I must enjoy myself during the short time left to me, for my days are numbered.” In the same way, while endeavouring to dissuade her lover from his ardent pursuit of her, Madame de Prie asked him what was the use of his learning to love her, while adding that something told her for certain that her life would terminate before long.

Never did this extraordinary woman appear more brilliant than upon the eve of her dissolution.

Merely three days before her death, her château was full of people, including the Duc de Bouillon, who subsequently behaved shamefully. The Marquise was at her brightest, and in an evening entertainment recited three hundred verses in a manner which gained universal applause. Not a soul believed her when she said that she had only three more days to live, least of all the young noble whom she had distinguished by openly accepting his love. To him on the morrow she gave one valuable diamond, and fifty thousand livres' worth of other gems, which she said that she wished him to take for her and keep at Rouen. She told him gaily as he left Courbe-Épine by her orders, that she sent him away because she did not choose that he should see her die. He laughed, thought the joke ridiculous, and took his leave.

On the third day after her lover's departure the Marquise took poison, presumably arsenic. Her sufferings were terrible, her body being all twisted up into knots, while her screams were piercing and awful.

The Marquise de Prie was strong and took a long time to die, but death relieved her of her agonies at length. The Duc de Bouillon, who had witnessed all her contortions, the twistings of her poor body and face, then repaired to Versailles. There, in order to ingratiate himself with her enemy Fleury, he gave a comic description of the last moments of the Marquise de Prie, which was con-



sidered to be quite funny by that prelate and those who worshipped the rising star.

For such Fleury indeed was—and his reign, which was now commencing, was to last for some twenty years, during which he mis-ruled France, until he died when over ninety.

As Fleury was really nothing but a weak, if pigheaded and obstinate, old man, had not the vanity of Madame de Prie prompted her self-destruction at such an early age, she might yet have come back to the Court, to upset his reign and prevent all the terrible misfortunes which he brought upon France. The Duc de Bourbon, who was a mere nonentity without her, might perhaps never have regained his place as the King grew older, but it seems more than likely that, with the aid of the able financier Joseph Pâris-Duverney and the goodwill of the neglected Queen, Madame de Prie would eventually have controlled the indolent young King.

It would certainly not have been Marie Leszcynska who would have prevented the Marquise from so doing, it is indeed probable that the Queen would rather have seen the woman who had raised her to share the Crown in the position of the King's *maîtresse en titre* than any of the numerous women who, without a particle of her ability, filled that envied position during his useless career upon the throne.

The Marquise, however, knew her own business best, and accordingly thought it wiser after her dis-



grace to terminate her career tragically by her own hand. Further speculation as to what she might have done if she had lived is therefore useless. One reflection we may, however, be allowed. It is that it would not have been the fact of her being some ten or eleven years older than Louis which would have prevented her rise. For the King at the very time of the disgrace of Madame de Prie was being indoctrinated into the paths of vice by a woman whom he playfully called "Maman," the plump Comtesse de Toulouse, who was certainly old enough to be his mother and should have known better than, for interested motives, to lead the seventeen-year-old Prince astray.

The Court was, however, seething with iniquity; there was therefore little cause for surprise in this action of the middle-aged daughter of the Duc de Noailles. Madame de Prie appears indeed to have appraised the Court at its proper value when, just previous to her temporary retirement as the result of Fleury's intrigues, she wrote to the Duc de Richelieu as follows: "I find all the obstacles in the world opposed to my intention (of effacing myself). I shall have all the more merit in following it, since they only seek to baffle it with chains which, while appearing to be those of flowers, may well contain some of the serpents with which the Court is filled. I have never seen anything so black, so low, so false and much to be despised as that which I find there. Only does M. le Duc appear to me

to-day as worthy of my veneration, and of all my attachment. His firmness, friendship, and truth towards myself have made him for ever the master of my life, which I would with joy lay down in his service."

From the above, it will be noticed that the Marquis d'Argenson evidently spoke truly when he talked of how good M. le Duc was to Madame de Prie. That the Marquise herself recognised this goodness is evident. Further, the cause of her being willing to leave the Court at the time that she did so, before the occasion of her disgrace and that of the Duc de Bourbon, was to make things easier for her princely lover. She had only then consented to her self-effacement because the intriguing Cardinal Fleury had falsely intimated to M. le Duc that if only the Marquise de Prie and Pâris-Duverney were out of the way he would not throw so many obstacles in the way of the First Minister. When she had retired to Normandy, Fleury had not kept his word, with the result that Madame de Prie had been compelled to return to the Court, to cow her enemies and help to straighten out the muddle into which the State affairs had fallen owing to the constant under-handed interference of the Cardinal in the Government.

After her death Pâris-Duverney, who had been banished at the same time as herself, was not very long before making his re-appearance at Versailles. Indeed the clever but unscrupulous financier, who

lived to well over eighty years of age, proved of the greatest assistance to the King as a money-provider, especially in times of war, until well on into the days of Madame de Pompadour. The King, however, made no more First Ministers, for after the death of the Marquise the Cardinal practically constituted himself as the Government.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### Queen Marie Lesczynska

IN the annals of modern France, Marie Lesczynska stands out notably as a woman who lived decently and set a good example under every provocation to do otherwise. The same may perhaps be said of Maria Theresa, the short, puffy Spanish Queen of Louis XIV., but she, poor woman, was such a nonentity, and made herself so ridiculous with her ideas of Spanish etiquette, that her character does not excite interest.

The Polish Princess, on the other hand, was a woman, one breathing with life, hope, girlish anticipation of happiness, when she came to Versailles to be mated to a handsome boy, one who was so great and had it in his power to make her so happy. She was prepared from her first meeting to make of that boy an idol, but by the time that, at the age of seventeen, Louis XV. had developed into a splendidly handsome young man, Marie had found out that the feet of her idol were composed of some substance less reliable even than clay.

Sulky and taciturn, Louis was also a "cry baby."

When thwarted in any matter, he would say little, but indulge in violent fits of petulant weeping, and go for consolation to His Eminence the Cardinal. Fleury, the King's absolute master, who encouraged this dependence, was not, however, his own master. He depended for his strength, his power to do as he chose, upon the Jesuits, who, through le Tellier, had put him where he was. From an establishment at Issy, to which place, when thwarted by M. le Duc, Fleury would run away, leaving the King in despair at his loss, the Jesuits gave the Cardinal their orders to continue to bully the Jansenists, so strong in the kingdom, not only among the ranks of the clergy, but in those of the Parliament of Paris and in the provincial Parliaments. They ordered Cardinal Fleury to take a Jesuit as his own confessor, and to do all in his power to impose upon the Parliaments the Papal Bull *Unigenitus*, which Louis XIV. had died without being able to compel the Parliament of Paris to register.

The boy Louis was taught by Fleury to become a bigot from childhood, that is to say, taught to swallow the tenets of religion in an uncompromising manner, to worship the form, the letter, without in any way imbibing the holy spirit of worship. Thus Louis remained throughout life. When he became old, and more and more immoral, he instructed the poor young girls whom he purchased and seduced in the tenets of religion, made them chapels in the secret places where he kept them hidden, and com-

pelled them to go on their knees to say their prayers with him.

Marie Lesczynska had discovered even before she lost the protective influence of Madame de Prie how very little she was, as Fleury from the first caused serious rebuffs to be administered to this Queen who had been made by his enemy the Marquise. She sought in vain, shortly after the disgrace of that lady and M. le Duc, a favour for M. de Nangis, one of her Household. When the Cardinal refused this and the Queen complained, the boy-King told his wife sulkily, "Do as I do, ask nothing of the Cardinal," thus revealing his own position of dependence upon the petty-minded Jesuit-ridden prelate.

Upon another occasion Queen Marie received a short note from Louis which ran : "You will execute the Cardinal's orders." Her life and hope were thus soon crushed out of her. She shortly assumed an attitude of extreme reserve towards her husband, to the extent that it was said of the Queen that she conceived his children without ever addressing him. Although graceful, lively, and attractive, far from endeavouring to exercise any little female coquetry to draw her husband's attention towards her, she began to shun gaiety and frivolity, and to accustom herself to an uninteresting, humdrum existence in which that husband had no part or lot. While Marie Lesczynska ceased ever to ask anything for herself, she likewise instructed those of her House-



hold to show similar reserve. For she did not choose that they should run the risk of snubbings which would recoil upon herself.

We have already mentioned that the Polish Princess had a remarkably handsome figure, and never did her tournure look so well as when she was mounted, she being a fearless and elegant rider. When the King commenced to take as mistresses the various daughters of the Marquise de Nesle, these young ladies resented the fact of being eclipsed by the Queen when on horseback, with the result that Louis ordered his wife to ride no more.

This Marquise de Nesle, who had been Made-moiselle de Mazarin, the granddaughter of Hortense Mancini, was one of the ladies who had been placed about the Queen's person, notwithstanding the fact of her notorious immoralities. This ultra-gallant Marquise, still giddy to a degree when between thirty-four and thirty-nine years of age (she died before she was forty), was a source of irritation to the young Queen owing to her constant requests for leave to absent herself of an evening upon some frivolous pretext. Becoming wearied of the lightness of demeanour of her "Lady of the Palace," Marie at length devised a plan to checkmate her constant runnings about at late hours. No sooner would the Queen notice the usual fidgetings on the part of the Marquise de Nesle which betokened a desire to take herself off, than, with a little grain of malice, she would suggest that the hour was one propitious

for the reading aloud of some historical work, or a religious book, such as *The Imitation of Christ*, or one of the Gospels. Thus, whether she would or no, the former *chère amie* of the Ducs de Richelieu and de Bourbon was kept chained to her place in the Queen's apartments.

When she died, in the year 1729, the Marquise de Nesle left behind her five nominally legitimate daughters, four of whom were, before long, to occupy the place which should have been filled by the neglected Queen. One of these, the Marquise de la Tournelle, was, however, well known to be the daughter of the Duc de Bourbon.

The Queen, who was obliged to sit still uncomplainingly to witness her own dishonour, would, however, by some clever if bitter jest at times revenge herself at the expense of these sisters when they were placed by the King about her own person. One such recorded instance is as follows :

Louise Julie, the eldest of the de Nesle girls, who was Comtesse de Mailly, after having been given to the King as his paramour was a lady-of-honour, Upon an occasion that she sought to rejoin the King, she deferentially asked the Queen's leave to retire.

Marie Lesczynska then caused the Comtesse to look very foolish before the other ladies present, by wittily remarking, "Comment, oubliez-vous donc que vous êtes la maîtresse?" (What! do you forget that you are the mistress?)

Of all the Queens of France, Marie is the only one of whom we hear as taking a permanently active interest in the poor. By other Queens and the nobility in general those of the lower orders were looked upon as a necessary evil, to be endured because by their toil and labour they supplied the funds to minister to the pleasures and luxuries of the great. Not so the Polish Princess. Brought up in poverty, she was by nature economical, and would excite derision by always inquiring the price of an object or an entertainment. Concerning the poor, she would remark, "Money is the product of the people's labour," and would always set aside a portion of her allowance, which was by no means commensurate to her rank, for the relief of the needy. Her charity was carefully thought out and not confined to one particular class. For instance, the Queen gave money as dowries for young ladies who could not otherwise marry, she paid out of her own pocket for the education of boys, she sent sums to poor officers who had been wounded. Further, she provided for the apprenticeship of the sons of artisans, caused schools to be established for those of both sexes in the villages in the country, even had homes built for the indigent workmen in the cities, not forgetting the numerous class of street porters, who came from what was then a foreign country—Savoy.

In every way this angelic woman did all in her power to counteract the evils which were in a great

measure the result of the grasping avarice of the nobility and the excessive taxation caused by the spendthrift system of government, the frequent wars, the mad extravagances of the King and the Royal mistresses.

Although Marie Antoinette, the Austrian Queen who succeeded the Polish Marie upon the throne, is credited with having had a kind heart, and with having performed occasional isolated acts of kindness and condescension to those of the lower orders, how different was her behaviour! Had she but taken a leaf from the book of the amiable Marie Lesczynska, she might perhaps have averted that bloody Revolution to which the action of so many other women had for long past inevitably been leading a down-trodden France.

But then Marie Antoinette possessed the love of a good-natured, stupid, and faithful husband, at whose good intentions she mocked, and could, if she had chosen, have done anything with him, whereas what chance had the well-intentioned daughter of the jovial ex-King Stanislas? As the years went on, she found her only resource in prayer, and, while prostrated upon her *prie-Dieu* before the cross of her Saviour, found no relief from the horrors that surrounded her, other than the bitter tears that welled unceasingly from her wearied eyes. Outwardly, however, the Queen kept up a brave show, even when she found that the King was leading his young daughters into

courses as evil as his own, teaching them to drink and playing the lover with them after the fashion of the Regent with his daughter the debauched Duchesse de Berry.

Having no authority—being allowed none—even over her daughters, Queen Marie gradually got rid of the irksome presence of the dissolute section of the ladies of her household. Tired of their frequent requests to absent themselves and not wishing to know where they were or what they were doing, Marie gave to all perpetual leave and selected a few ladies of mature years and better morals as her cronies. With these, while the King might indulge as he liked with those whom he chose to summon to his *petits cabinets*, the Queen endeavoured to forget the world and the wickedness of the Court. Although she never wearied of praying for the King's conversion and amendment, she endeavoured to find a little peace and repose in the society of these worthy ladies.

A quiet supper with the Duchesse de Luynes, with Madame de Rupelmonde and Madame d'An-cenis, would usually be followed by the reading aloud of improving books. When, as sometimes happened, the Queen's little supper-parties were followed by a game of cards, she considered herself as quite frivolous, for, although lively enough by nature, all the sparkle of life had been crushed out of kind-hearted Marie Lesczynska. The courtiers and the King sneered at these reunions, which they

cynically called the Queen's "Holy Weeks," but far better would it have been both for the present and the future of France had a few of those who sneered at this admirable Princess but had the decency to follow her excellent example.



## CHAPTER XXIV

### The Comtesse de Maîilly

It is not to be supposed that the Princes of the Blood were contented to sit down in peace and see Fleury ruling the King, themselves, and the Kingdom. After some efforts and imploring messages sent to the King, the Duc de Bourbon obtained, greatly to his delight, leave to indulge once more in the field sports which he loved, and a little later, some two years after the death of Madame de Prie, his banishment to his splendid seat of Chantilly was revoked.

The first wife of this head of the family of Condé had been dead for some little time, and he had now married again, having selected for his spouse a Savoyarde Princess of great personal attraction. After fifty-five years of rule, first as Duke of Savoy, then as King of Sicily, and lastly with the title of King of Sardinia, the tricky Victor Amadeus II. resigned his thrones in 1730, being succeeded by his son Charles Emanuel III. It was the youngest sister of this Prince who became the second Princesse de Condé, Duchesse de Bourbon. Finding her

remarkably pretty, the unscrupulous Dowager Duchesse de Bourbon, the daughter, it will be remembered, of Louis XIV. and Madame de Montespan, determined to make use of her new daughter-in-law. She did not inform her son of her immoral intentions, which were to give his wife to the twenty-year-old Louis XV. as his mistress, and through her influence to combat the power of Cardinal Fleury.

Mademoiselle de Charolais, M. le Duc's sister, and her cousin Mademoiselle de Valois, daughter of the Regent, had during the Regency been at the same time rivals for the love and allies to obtain the release from the Bastille of that volatile scamp the Duc de Richelieu. There had then been no sacrifices that these ill-regulated Princesses had not been willing to make on behalf of this triumphant wretch. Notwithstanding this fact, when the Regent's daughter, to induce her father to release Richelieu, had consented to exile to Italy as the Duchesse of Modena, the Duc de Richelieu had soon wearied of the favours of Mademoiselle de Charolais.

Ambitious as the rest of her family, this Princess had subsequently sought, and with some measure of success, to supplant "Maman" de Toulouse with the still boyish King. While Louis XV. had not been averse to amusing himself with his cousin, he had never regarded her seriously; had he but done so, there would have been no need for the subsequent manœuvres of her mother, Madame la Duchesse.

The King, who was from the first very much taken with M. le Duc's second wife, very readily fell in with these manœuvres, giving to Madame la Duchesse some valuable diamonds, some of which she was to keep herself, the others to give to the young Princess whom it was sought to seduce from her wifely fidelity.

Fleury, who, through his own valet Barjac and the King's confidential valet Bachelier, got wind of the affair of the diamonds, was very much alarmed. He had, however, an ally, although not so intentionally, in the person of one very much concerned. M. le Duc had not the slightest regard for the morals or want of them of his sister de Charolais, but when it came to be a question of his wife becoming on too intimate terms with Louis, that was another matter! Therefore, although he was unable to prevent the frequent visits of the King to Chantilly, he carefully took pains to see that they should be as much as possible employed in hunting parties, and by all other means in his power the Duc de Bourbon contrived to upset his mother's schemes, which he saw through before long.

Cardinal Fleury, however, having become frightened, determined to play at the game of diamond cut diamond. He resolved that, to counteract the charms of the young Duchesse de Bourbon, another young married lady should be provided for the King's amusement. The old priestly ruler of France was very much *lié* with de Tencin, who

headed the Jesuit cabal and had now contrived to make himself a Cardinal. By his advice, Fleury consulted his sister, the infamous Madame de Tencin, who was now as ever ready to follow her old nefarious customs of the time of the Regency, and to act as *entremetteuse*.

Madame de Tencin represented that a young lady who would be quite suitable to the purpose for which she was required was ready to her hand. All that was necessary was a little money, some for herself of course, and the rest wherewith to buy the lady's husband. Madame de Tencin told the Cardinal that she was a girl of the same age as the King, Louise Julie de Nesle, married four years earlier to her cousin the Comte Louis de Mailly.

The Comte was poor and unable to cut the figure at Court which his rank required. When therefore, after considerable bargaining, the Cardinal agreed through Madame de Tencin to pay him the sum of 20,000 livres, he said that he was willing to sell his wife to the King.

In the whole matter of this infamous transaction neither Louis XV. nor the eldest daughter of the Marquise de Nesle seems to have been consulted. While the Cardinal appears merely to have informed Louis XV. that it was time for him to take a mistress, the Comte de Mailly and Madame de Tencin persuaded Louise Julie that it would ill become her to refuse to accept the Royal favour. The affair in its inception was a horrible and cold-blooded bargain,

and, according to the King's valet de chambre Bachelier, upon the first occasion that, upon a winter's night, he conducted Madame de Mailly to Louis XV., the young couple met each other with the greatest embarrassment, so much so that Bachelier was obliged to stay with them for some time to endeavour to set them at ease. When the meetings, which were kept secret, continued, Louise Julie de Mailly and Louis became attached to one another, and the King sought to reward his lady-love by the present of 1,000 livres at each interview.

The miserly Cardinal, who had for his own selfish reasons thrown the innocent young Comtesse into the King's arms, refused, however, to supply these sums, to obtain which Louis was obliged to have recourse to the resourceful and artful M. de Chauvelin, the Keeper of the Seals. This Minister, the most able and patriotic of the time of Louis XV., despised and hated the Cardinal's policy, and endeavoured soon, by working through the King's girlish friend the young Duc de Gesvres, to let Louis know all of Fleury's weak points.

Bachelier, however, emptied the King's pockets nightly, and took any compromising documents to Barjac, who handed them over to the Cardinal.

When, therefore, through the action of the two valets de chambre, Fleury received the paper concerning himself which had been given to the King by Gesvres, he became furious. He gave Louis a great scolding on the subject of the friends with



whom he consorted, and, in order that they should no more have access to the Royal apartments, ordered all the locks of the doors of the King's rooms at Versailles to be changed, while himself keeping duplicates of all the new keys.

With this act of tyranny the King feebly complied ; he was, indeed, absolutely the slave of the arbitrary old priest, fearing to gainsay him upon any matter whatever.

So weak was Louis at this time that, far from sending away his treacherous valet Bachelier, he tamely acquiesced when the Cardinal made Bachelier a Seigneur, giving to him the lucrative posts of Intendant of Marly and the Trianon. Barjac was also advanced, and became a great man who held his levées, at which great nobles were not ashamed to be seen as suppliants for some favour at Court. Barjac it was who soon appointed the farmers-general of the taxes. Taken according to his own valuation, it was not the Cardinal but his valet who ruled France. He would say, "We cannot do this," or "That is an affair which I have finished."

The affairs that were finished were often those of the down-trodden Protestants, whose affairs ended with their lives, for the gentle rule of the Cardinal was one of persecution. It was, however, the struggle of the Jesuit faction, which upheld Fleury, against the Jansenistical Parliaments, which caused the really great and intense excitement of



France, not only during the twenty years of Fleury's mismanagement, but later, when he was dead and Louis XV. emancipated from his thralldom.

Among the remarkable women of France of Fleury's time mention must be made of one who was triumphantly advanced by the Jesuits as the living example of a miracle, in opposition to the marvels and wonders reported by the Jansenists as having occurred at the tomb of the worthy deacon Pâris, a man who had devoted his life to the poor.

The woman in question was a young girl named Mademoiselle Cadière. The Jesuits reported that "this virgin," who was being educated in a convent by the Jesuit priest Girard, showed on her person the five wounds of Christ.

Unfortunately for the miracle, both she and many other women of all ranks of whom Girard was the director were at once discovered by the Jansenist sceptics to have been Girard's victims. Mademoiselle Cadière and others becoming mothers, a great outcry arose against the Jesuits in the south, where these horrors were exposed as being the result of Girard's teaching of the Illuminist or Molinist doctrines, that the sin of the body purifies the soul by humbling it.

The reply of the Jesuits of Provence was to say that the miraculous Mademoiselle Cadière was evidently, after all, merely a sorceress—that she had bewitched Father Girard. Hence any irre-

gularities that he might have committed in the convent of Ollioules and elsewhere were caused by her suggestion. An accusation of being a witch was brought by them against the poor girl, and she was condemned to death!

The case was then forced by the Jansenists before the Parliament of Aix, when all of Girard's other female victims testified for him, and against Mademoiselle Cadière.

The Parliament of Aix thereupon, being afraid of the Church, sentenced the unhappy girl to be "hanged and strangled" at Toulon. So great was, however, the popular fury and outcry that, in a new trial, half of the previously intimidated Jansenist *conseillers* of the Aix Parliament now voted for the girl Cadière, and against Girard. The President gave his casting vote in favour of the priest, who was now saved in turn from being hanged. The populace of Provence were furious, and ill-treated both the President of the Parliament and Girard, whom he had saved. The unfortunate Mademoiselle Cadière, whom the men of the robe had ordered to be returned to her parents, was, however, never seen again! The Jesuits smuggled her away to some underground sewer, called an *in pace*, beneath a convent, where she probably died of starvation, or was gnawed to death by rats in a charnel house of dead men's bones.

This affair was not dissimilar to the celebrated affair of Gauffridi, "Prince of the Magicians," at

Marseilles in 1610, that of Urbain Grandier at Loudun in 1634, and that of the Vicaire Picart and the unhappy Madeleine Palud during the Fronde in 1649. We only mention it here as exemplary of the rising hatred during the régime of Fleury of the Parliamentarians against the Jesuits, whose absolute rule in all religious matters the Cardinal sought to impose throughout France.

To return to Madame de Mailly, the amiable favourite imposed upon the compliant King by the Cardinal just as he would have told him to take a new Minister of State.

She was at the time of her first being presented to the King a girl of most elegant and pleasing appearance. From her handsome Mancini great-grandmother she had inherited the glorious dark eyes for which the beautiful Hortense had been famous. Her colouring was brilliant, her skin soft and ivory-like, although in tint her features were more inclined to those of the brunette than the blonde. Girlish in appearance, Madame de Mailly was rather slightly built. Graceful in the extreme, her hands and feet were very small and well shaped.

Her nature was sweet, she was unselfish to a degree, and soon ardently loved the handsome Louis for himself alone. Far from expecting anything from her Royal lover, soon Louise de Mailly it was who was at all the expense of entertaining the King. While he very soon ceased to provide this flower-like creature with funds, she

became greatly indebted on account of the expenses which she incurred to receive Louis XV. in her own apartments or in those where they met at Versailles, of which Louise Julie even provided the blue silken sheets.

As the discretion of the handsome young Comtesse was all that could be desired, while for several years the liaison was kept a secret, the Cardinal considered that he had every cause to congratulate himself upon the choice made for him by Madame de Tencin. Upon one matter, at all events, he had no further cause for anxiety, as from the date of his intimacy with Madame de Mailly the King ceased to pay such frequent visits to Chantilly. Louis seemed, indeed, to have forgotten all about the pretty wife of M. le Duc. Fleury found, however, that there were other ladies of the Court bold enough to be setting their caps at the King. He seemed likely to be all the more accessible to their wiles from the fact that the Queen, having borne in succession six or seven children in seven years, had now closed her doors to Louis XV., alleging some feminine malady which rendered conjugal life distasteful to her.

Under these circumstances, in order to keep ladies who might not be so discreet and unavaricious as the Comtesse at a distance, the Cardinal decreed that the King should no longer make a secret of his connection with Madame de Mailly, but announce her as his *maîtresse en titre*. The way in

which the announcement was made was as follows. One night when the Comtesse was being conducted closely hooded to the King's apartments, she, as if accidentally, allowed her hood to fall while passing a couple of ladies of the Court on the staircase. The secret, which had doubtless been previously guessed at, was one now no longer, and the Comtesse de Mailly was now publicly recognised as one to whom it behoved those who sought for advancement to approach with deference.

Little, however, did the Court at first understand that lady's disinterested nature. It soon, however, became apparent by the manner in which, owing to her own kindness and good-nature, she allowed herself to be supplanted in the affections of Louis XV. by her designing younger sister, Pauline Félicité de Nesle.

The whole intrigue of this affair is distasteful, and we will not dwell upon it. Suffice it to say that Pauline Félicité, whom the King soon made a great show of marrying to Félix de Vintimille, was a plain young woman of sparkling vivacity and acuteness. She was, moreover, the only woman whom the dissolute King ever loved in the course of his long career among the petticoated throng. Madame de Vintimille would, moreover, certainly have exercised far more sway politically upon the Kingdom of France than her sister de Mailly had not death cut short at an early age the career just opening out before her.

The influence of the Comtesse de Mailly had, however, not gone for nothing. Devoted to the Queen, whose good she had ever at heart, she had, with Marie Leszcynska and the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Germain-Louis de Chauvelin, pushed Louis XV., and through him Fleury, to the War of the Polish Succession, with the object of reinstating the Queen's father King Stanislas upon the throne of Poland.



## CHAPTER XXV

### Pauline Félicité de Nesle

THE attempt of the Queen's father to regain his Crown failed, partly owing to the parsimony of Fleury and partly to the Cardinal's secret predilection for ultra-Catholic Austria. Owing to the promptings of the Jesuits, and against the interests of France when King Stanislas, with great risk, had proceeded from Versailles to Warsaw in Poland, the Cardinal failed to support him there with the French troops that had been promised.

Again, when having retired to Dantzic, where he was besieged by 30,000 Russians, the Queen's father was anxiously expecting the arrival of the French fleet to his aid, Fleury failed to send a single ship.

The war party, Louis XV. himself and all the young nobles of the Court, were, however, too much for Fleury in one respect. The Cardinal was unable to avoid placing 100,000 men on the Rhine to oppose Austria. These fine troops, under the old Maréchal-Duc de Villars and that able soldier the Comte de Belle-Isle, were, however, pinned

to the Rhine banks by the Cardinal's orders, thus 70,000 Austrians opposing them were able to march off unmolested to Italy. The French eventually proceeded to Italy also, but we will not follow the details of the war of the Polish Succession, in which, although Spain and Savoy intervened on the side of France, these countries only pursued their own selfish policies, at Naples in the south and Milan in the north of Italy.

Although the French gained two great victories over the Austrians in Italy, owing to the continued treachery of Fleury, Poland was lost to Stanislas when that country was overrun by 100,000 Russians and Saxons.

After some hard fighting at Dantzic, in which King Stanislas was nobly aided by the Comte de Plélo and 1,600 French volunteers who came to his rescue, he was compelled to escape in disguise to the Court of Prussia. Augustus III. of Saxony, the ally of Austria and Russia, then became King of Poland.

While Austria was in very low water in Italy, Fleury now treacherously negotiated a peace with that country, greatly to her advantage. The friend of Madame de Mailly and the Queen, the patriotic Chauvelin, bravely stood out, however, against the Cardinal. The Keeper of the Seals actually ventured to browbeat Fleury, and to refuse to allow France to subscribe to the absurd terms she was offering to the beaten Austrians. By his action,

Chauvelin gained the Duchies of Lorraine and Bar for King Stanislas Lesczynski, who was to retain his title of King of Poland (1737).

As Stanislas had no sons, a proviso was made that Lorraine should be annexed to France at the death of the Queen's father. This it was, and remained French until torn from France by Germany in the war of 1870.

King Stanislas established his Court at Lunéville in Lorraine, where he lived in a very free and easy style, somewhat after the fashion of Old King Cole, while being greatly beloved by the people of the country despite his absolute disregard of the moral code, which he called "his little peccadilloes." While in escaping from Dantzic Stanislas had taken with him two Polish ladies, the Duchess Ossolinska and her sister, the real Madame de Pompadour of his Court was the Marquise de Boufflers, who ruled the Prince in a sort of a way. As the nobles of Lorraine all lived in the same free and easy way as their Sovereign, the manners and morals of Lunéville were of such a rough and ready description as to cause Marie Lesczynska gently to tell her good-humoured father that he really ought to endeavour to put the affairs of his Court into a state of more propriety. There was, however, nothing low or base about Stanislas, and while striving by all means to introduce the love of *les belles lettres* into Lorraine, the jovial King established schools and academies, and generally

showered benefits upon the inhabitants of the country.

It was not until the close of the war which she had helped to promote, and which left Stanislas as ruler of a country which he was to transmit to France, that Madame de Mailly found herself compelled to share the favours of Louis XV. with her young sister.

Mademoiselle de Nesle before coming to the Court had declared, "I will make the King love me; I will hunt out Fleury and govern France."

Madame de Vintimille succeeded easily enough in making Louis love her. He admired her genius and, as she discreetly exercised her power over him under the shadow of her sister's wing, Fleury did not for some time realise how absolutely opposed to himself, his Austrian policy and Austrian Jesuits, was the sister of Madame de Mailly. She had, however, a powerful mind, and with boundless courage was preparing entirely to change the policy of Europe by first changing that of Versailles.

Frederick II., afterwards known as Frederick the Great, ascended the throne of Prussia in May 1740. Better informed of everything French than even Fleury, this twenty-eight-year-old Prince understood the game that was being played. He realised that it was quite upon the cards that, owing to Louis' love for the young daughter of the Marquise de Nesle, that King might be lifted out of the mud in which he had been left to grovel by Fleury and

become a man. Through the strength of the abler young woman quietly working behind him, Louis might show strength himself, fling Fleury and his Austrian tendencies overboard, and turn to Prussia.

Reckoning upon this unseen force behind the throne, one which was not reckoned with in France, directly after his accession Frederick astonished Europe by his first bold coup, invaded Austrian territory and took Silesia.

The ruler of Austria, who had just succeeded to the great dominions of her father, Charles VI., Archduke of Austria and Emperor of Germany, was the young Maria Theresa, Queen of Hungary. She was married to Duke Francis of Lorraine, who had been compelled by Chauvelin at the end of the Polish war to cede Lorraine to Stanislas, while accepting the Duchy of Tuscany in exchange.

Francis was very soon elected Emperor of Germany in succession to the Bavarian Emperor Charles VII., who reigned for a short time after Charles VI., the Duke of Lorraine's father-in-law.

Thus it is that we always hear of the great Empress Maria Theresa, that Archduchess of Austria having become Empress by her husband's elevation.

Fleury, now eighty-seven years of age, and his Jesuit backing had by this time realised that against them at Versailles they had Madame de Vintimille, and, in a less powerful degree, her sister the Comtesse de Mailly. For the latter, although she had



been eclipsed in the King's love by her sister, had not yet been discarded by Louis XV.

Although the King had now defiantly changed the locks on his doors, so that the Cardinal could no longer visit him unannounced, he had not yet become man enough to overcome his fear of the old priest, his ruler.

He therefore played his two mistresses false, allowing the Cardinal to strike at them by one blow after another. Thus the truly great Minister, Chauvelin, who had by his firmness gained a country for France, was exiled from Versailles. Exiled also were the Marquis de Nesle and the Comte de Mailly. The two sisters were even compelled by the petty-minded King to go to Cardinal Fleury to beg that the place of exile of their father might be altered, so that he was sent no further away from them than Caen in Normandy.

Madame de Vintimille, however, seemed before long to recover her influence entirely. She quite overcame the Cardinal, by appointing against his wishes M. de Breteuil to the post of Minister of War.

To make up for this disappointment, Fleury had the pleasure at this time of learning of the death of his former rival, M. le Duc, a man whom he had always feared. The Duc de Bourbon, who from jealousy had latterly confined his wife as a close prisoner, had caught a cold while out shooting, which had quickly carried him off. In addition to



a three-year-old son, the Prince de Condé, M. le Duc left behind him a legitimatised daughter by the Marquise de Nesle. This young lady, the half-sister of the King's two mistresses, was Mademoiselle de Verneuil, and while the little Prince de Condé was at once appointed by the King Governor of Burgundy, Henriette de Verneuil was married off to the Comte de Guiche.

As both the Comtesse de Mailly and her sister de Vintimille were about to become mothers of the King's children, the people of France now expected that the fortunes of these ladies of the Nesle family would rise very high when their children were born.

The hopes of Madame de Mailly were, however, dashed to the ground owing to an accident, while Pauline Félicité de Vintimille had by this time proved herself far too dangerous to Fleury and those behind him to be allowed to live any longer.

To the great delight of Louis XV., she presented him with a very healthy son at Versailles upon the fourth day of September in the year 1741.

While the son lived to a good old age, the unhappy mother was poisoned, by some person unknown. Feeling herself to be dying, Pauline Félicité sent a message to her sister de Mailly by her father-confessor. But this priest had also been poisoned! He tottered and fell dead while entering the apartments of the Comtesse. To this sister of

his dead love Louis XV. turned for consolation in his grief, which was pitiable in the extreme. He was not, however, man enough to have any thorough investigation made into the manner in which, or by whom, the poison had been administered to Pauline Félicité and her confessor.



MADAME DU DEFFAND



## CHAPTER XXVI

### The Marquise de la Tournelle

UNTIL a few days before her death, when the King had removed her for her accouchement to Versailles, Pauline Félicité de Nesle had chosen to live in great retirement at the King's hunting box at Choisy.

This was a house which the complaisant Mademoiselle de Charolais had arranged for Louis XV., and to which only ladies were admitted. Although many ladies were asked to stay at Choisy for short periods, none of them was ever accompanied by her husband.

While people at the Court wondered greatly in what manner Madame de Vintimille occupied herself at Choisy, she was for a time, in conjunction with the Comte de Belle-Isle, secretly working against the Austrian intrigues of Maria Theresa to place her husband Francis of Lorraine upon the Imperial throne. Although in this design Maria Theresa had the goodwill of Marie Leszcynska and her young daughters, as well as of Fleury, Pauline Félicité proved successful. The Comte de Belle-Isle was sent with a magnificent retinue to the Diet

of Frankfort at the end of 1740, when his influence turned the scale of the election for Emperor in favour of Charles Albert, the Bavarian Elector.

Among the most prying and curious women in France was Madame du Deffand. She had formerly been a hanger-on of the Marquise de Prie, indeed the go-between of the Marquise in some of those little amourettes in which she was wont to indulge, especially after M. le Duc had become interested in the charms of the Comtesse d'Egmont. After the death of Madame de Prie, Madame du Deffand had contrived to establish herself at the Court—for such it indeed was at Sceaux—of that arbitrary Princess the Duchesse du Maine. Becoming tired of the vagaries of the ever-restless Madame du Maine and of the incessant agitation of Sceaux, where night was turned into day and life a frenzied excitement, while all had to obey the will of the Duchesse, Madame du Deffand sought to better herself.

Having made herself the friend of the Queen's intimate, the Duchesse de Luynes, she sought to become a spy upon Madame de Vintimille, while likewise hoping to reap through her some advantages by which she might form an establishment of her own.

By all kinds of flattery, Madame du Deffand endeavoured to win the good graces of Pauline Félicité, but that which she desired above all was to gain a foothold at Choisy. Not succeeding, she wrote with the greatest amount of ardent gush, for



she was a great letter-writer, vowing that nothing in the world would give her so much delight as to devote her life to the service of the King's favourite.

Pauline Félicité, however, knew her Deffand! Well understanding her tactics, while replying warmly and gratefully, she kept this intriguing lady at a distance, never allowing her to set foot inside Choisy.

Later we hear much of Madame du Deffand, especially in connection with the amiable secretary Mademoiselle de l'Espinasse, to whom she proved such a hard taskmistress. Although she became a spiteful old woman and blind, or almost blind, the caustic wit of Madame du Deffand made it an easy matter for her to attract many people of note to her salon, where, moreover, the *beaux yeux* of l'Espinasse were not lost upon the male visitors. Among other failings or follies, Madame du Deffand, when already old, fell violently in love with Horace Walpole, who was twenty years her junior, and no less than 838 letters which the blind old woman wrote to him by dictation have recently been given to the world in three large volumes.

Although Pauline Félicité had been successful in keeping out Madame du Deffand, the cause of her death may perhaps in a measure be traced to the fact that she made herself particularly obnoxious to those of the serving class at Choisy.

This establishment she endeavoured to rule and reform, just as she did the State, while revealing to

instrument in the hands of this Prince, around whom the party of bigots gathered in opposition to his father.

Adélaïde, the third daughter, had none of the timidity of Henriette. She was full of Polish vivacity and became passionately devoted to her father, who favoured her more than any of his daughters and never allowed her to be sent away from him to any convent for education. In endeavouring to block the war that was commencing to break out against Austria, which was called the war of the Austrian Succession, Fleury had the goodwill of these three young Princesses. The patriotic Mademoiselle de Nesle was, however, too much for them until she died, but the Dauphin and the King's daughters did not fail to endeavour to bind the King to the Austrian interests later, notwithstanding that they were not those of France.

War, however, broke out in November 1741, France joining Bavaria, Saxony, and Spain against Austria, upon whose side George II. of England, the ruler of Hanover also, soon declared himself.

Prussia was also the ally of France at the beginning of this war, but Frederick the Great became so greatly incensed at the manner in which his advice and interests were neglected at Versailles, and especially at the disregard shown by Fleury, to the one able French General, Belle-Isle, that he soon acted entirely upon his own account, making war or peace at such times as suited him best.

Frederick II. indeed had his pockets full of treacherous letters written by Fleury to Maria Theresa at the very time that France was supposed to be the ally of Prussia against that Princess. These letters the great Prussian had the pleasure of being able to show to the French Ambassador, the Duc de Vernon, in May 1742. In one of them Fleury had even offered to desert Prussia and force Frederick to return Silesia to Austria. In another, which Frederick the Great showed to Belle-Isle, this patriotic Frenchman was surprised to see that the Cardinal had denounced him as being the sole cause of the war!

After showing Belle-Isle this letter, Frederick asked him whether he would find fault with him if he should abandon France and make peace upon his own account alone.

The astounded Belle-Isle had not a word to say, and Prussia, followed by Holland, Denmark, Poland, Saxony, and Sardinia, made peace with Austria.

Thus, owing to the foolish action of Fleury, Louis XV. found himself left alone in Europe with only the Bavarians as his effete allies.

To crown the French difficulties, the Cardinal soon wrote to the gallant Belle-Isle, who was defending Prague against all odds, that he was "to come home" through the awful frost and snow with which Europe was then covered. Belle-Isle "came home" making one of the most wonderful retreats on record in the presence of an enemy. Whatever the rest of

France was thinking, Louis XV. had, however, forgotten about Belle-Isle and the French army. He had forgotten about Madame de Mailly, forgotten even her dearly beloved sister Pauline Félicité, who had been dead just a year. For had not these ladies some more sisters, and had not Louis seen them and thought them all desirable? Above all, had he not become most ardently, passionately attracted to one of them, a young widow, Marie Anne, Marquise de la Tournelle, who had contrived to introduce herself to the King through her sister's ruse? This twenty-four-year-old granddaughter of the Duchesse de Mazarin, the Queen's Mistress of the Robes, had, however, proved obdurate. She was not going to yield herself as easily as some other members of her family, but desired a very tangible *quid pro quo* for such a valuable gift as that of her dainty person, even although it might be to a King of France. Hence the King of France was in a state of distraction; what mattered to him the siege of Prague, or the condition of his army retiring under Belle-Isle through frost and snow surrounded by numberless wild Croatian cavaliers? Only one thing in the world seemed a matter of any concern to Louis at this moment: this was how to gain possession of the adorable Marquise de la Tournelle.

She was the youngest daughter of the Marquise de Nesle, and, with her sister the Marquise de Flavacourt, had been living with her grandmother the Duchesse de Mazarin. When the Mistress of the

Robes died in 1742, the Marquis de Flavacourt was absent at the seat of war, and thus the two young ladies turned for protection to their clever and unscrupulous uncle by marriage, Comte Phélippeaux de Maurepas. He and their aunt, who had inherited the property of the Duchesse de Mazarin, were, however, inhumane enough to order their nieces out of the house in Paris in which they had been living with their grandmother, saying that they wanted it for themselves.

Hortense Félicité de Flavacourt, a young woman as resourceful as she proved virtuous, took matters philosophically. While Marie Anne, raging and storming, dashed off to complain of her aunt and uncle to her friends, Madame de Flavacourt ordered a sedan-chair.

In this, after being carried the twelve miles from Paris to Versailles, the humorous young Marquise caused herself to be set down in the square in front of the Palace, and then sent her chair bearers away.

Soon a crowd of nobles and ladies came round to gaze upon the extraordinary spectacle of a lady seated alone in a sedan-chair in the midst of the Court of the Ministers. To these she blandly observed: "I am young, my father is in exile, my mother and grandmother are dead. My uncle and aunt have cast me off, therefore here I shall sit waiting to see if heaven will come to my aid."

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lovely face, for the Marquise was the handsomest of the family, and drawing nearer recognised its owner and was informed by Hortense Félicité, half humorously, half sadly, of her adventures. To him she repeated that she intended to sit where she was, in the hands of God, and wait to see if anything would happen.

What happened was that Gesvres soon brought the King out on the balcony of the Palace to look at the sedan-chair in the middle of the courtyard.

After staring for some time in amusement, Louis said: "She shall profit by the action of her ingenious brain. Go, Gesvres, and fetch her in, and procure for Madame de Flavacourt a lodging in the palace."

The King was soon laughing and chatting gaily with the lady of the sedan-chair, by whose beauty he was at once attracted. He promised her the post of First Lady of the Palace, and gave her some apartments once occupied by her sister, the Comtesse de Mailly. Madame de la Tournelle was also sent for, and to her was allotted a suite of rooms that had been recently occupied by a Bishop.

While Madame de Flavacourt continually turned away with a jest the King's suggestions that she should become more than friendly towards him, Marie Anne lured him on when this butterfly of a Monarch made the same suggestions to herself. But, the better to increase his im-

patience, while encouraging him, she kept Louis at a distance.

In the meantime, in order that he should not forget the ladies of the family of Nesle, she made an immoral use of her sister, Diane Adélaïde de Nesle, who always went by the name of Mademoiselle de Montcarvel. This sister the Marquise de la Tournelle would send on little visits to the King at Choisy, where he would keep her for several days at a time, while bargaining over the terms of her surrender proposed through Diane by the young widow Marie Anne.

Having added Mademoiselle de Montcarvel to his as yet incomplete bouquet of the Nesle family, Louis soon provided this go-between with a husband, in the shape of an elderly widower, the Duc de Lauraguais. The Marquise de la Tournelle still, however, refusing to yield, the King turned again to the Marquise de Flavacourt. Here he met with a more determined rebuff than before, especially as the Marquis de Flavacourt, writing from the seat of war, encouraged her opposition to the King by telling his wife that if she, like her sisters, should allow herself to be seduced by the immoral propositions of the Monarch he would most assuredly massacre her upon his return.

Matters being thus, Louis gave up his pursuit of the calm-minded and virtuous Hortense Félicité, who, after making friends with her uncle, the Minister de Maurepas, and his wife, lived in con-

tentment at Versailles, at peace with all the world.

The haughty Marquise de la Tournelle, on the other hand, remained at enmity with that clever and profuse writer of obscene and scurrilous verse, her uncle, who for so long as she lived never lost an opportunity of openly or secretly trying to damage his wife's niece. The King's affair with this lady, however, remaining at a standstill, Louis at length discovered that while the handsome young widow was constantly drawing him on, she was merely playing with him. He also discovered the reason to be that she had, in fact, no inclination whatever towards himself, as in the person of the young Duc d'Agenois she had already a lover to whom she was passionately attached.

Through this young noble's uncle, the worthless Duc de Richelieu, Louis sought by the most shady means to separate these lovers, another lady being employed by Richelieu to make passionate love to d'Agenois. At length this young man was foolish enough to answer a desperate letter from the lady, who threatened suicide unless he would return her affection, saying in his reply that he would "wipe away her tears for her"—or something of that kind. This letter was taken by Richelieu to the King, who took it to Marie Anne, to prove to her the infidelity of d'Agenois, while saying that now surely she would be cruel to him no longer.

There were various incidents before the Marquise

de la Tournelle, who probably understood more than the King imagined concerning his trickery about d'Aginois, came to terms with the King. One of these was that the Comte de Maurepas was nearly run through the body by the Duc de Richelieu when discovered spying upon the King at night when paying a friendly visit to the widow in her apartments.

Maurepas apologised abjectly, when Louis XV., who always took a delight in Maurepas' vicious petty nature, so like his own, told the Duc to put up his sword.

Eventually Marie Anne made her capitulation, upon the following terms. Her sister de Mailly was to be sent away by the King, and her apartments given to Madame de la Tournelle. Secondly, the Marquise de la Tournelle insisted upon being made a Duchesse in her own right—Duchesse de Châteauroux—and to be given a large income in accordance with her rank. Louis, who had become thin and miserable from his long disappointment in his love affair, agreed to everything. Although Madame de Mailly threw herself at his feet, he repulsed her when she begged for a little kindness, which had long been withheld from her. Then, in his usual underhanded manner, the King told the Comte d'Argenson to play the friend to the Comtesse, to advise her to go to Paris for a few days of change. This cunning rogue did as he was bid, and, after the King had been unusually kind to her,

Louise Julie de Mailly left him in tears. Louis followed her affectionately to the door, while, in a voice that was meant to be overheard, begging her to return "not later than Monday next."

She was never allowed to return to Versailles! and on the Monday the Marquise de la Tournelle was conducted in great state by various Princesses and Duchesses to the King at his villa at Choisy.



## CHAPTER XXVII

### The Duchesse de Châteauroux

THE King gave a great supper-party at Choisy to celebrate the arrival of the Marquise, to which, in addition to the great ladies who had escorted this siren to his arms, he invited the greatest nobles of France. There were present at the festive board, at which the triumphant Marie Anne queened it in the seat of honour next to the King, half a dozen Princes and Ducs with Royal blood in their veins, four or five Maréchaux de France, and many other great personages who ought to have been ashamed to present themselves at such an ignoble feast.

The Queen's friend the Duc de Luynes, however, had the courage to refuse to attend to celebrate this installation of a courtesan, and he deserved all the more credit for his refusal as it cost him the deprivation of the coveted Order of the Saint-Esprit which he was just about to receive.

While very soon the Parliament of Paris was compelled to register the appointment of Madame de la Tournelle to the Duchy of Châteauroux, "in consideration of her virtues," this young lady at once

tried to pick up the threads left hanging by her late sister Pauline Félicité. Above all, she sought to make a man of the King—a great Monarch like Louis XIV. whose name should be feared and respected in Europe. While possessing more vanity and haughtiness of demeanour, Marie Anne had not, however, a tithe of the ability of the unfortunate Marquise de Vintimille. At the first moment of her triumph, instead of insisting upon the recall of that brilliant man the exiled Chauvelin, she allowed the King to send him further away than before.

This too although, to the great delight of Louis and the whole of France, Cardinal Fleury died, over ninety years of age, in the month after the Duchesse de Châteauroux became the *maîtresse en titre* of Louis XV.

Instead of recalling Chauvelin, the first appointment of Madame de Châteauroux to the Royal Council was that of the Maréchal Duc de Noailles.

Cardinal Tencin also obtained admission to this, but, owing to the Duchesse, who caused Louis XV. to say, sharply, "Above all, no more priests!" Tencin failed to become a First Minister like Dubois.

The Maréchal de Noailles, although somewhat effete in the Council, was a good commander in the field. He had, however, owing to the reckless impetuosity of his young nephew, the Duc de Gramont, to sustain a violent defeat at the hands



MADAME DE CHÂTEAUROUX

From an engraving after the painting by Nattier



of George II. of England at Dettingen a few months after the new Royal favourite had procured his advancement.

George II. was the uncle of Frederick the Great, who for some time had by his threats overawed the English King, and prevented him from entering Germany with the army of English, Dutch, and Hanoverians that he had with him in Flanders. After George—who was, by the way, the last King of Great Britain to command an army before the enemy—had won at Dettingen, France thought it about time to make a declaration of war against him and Austria. Considering that France had already been at war for about a year, this was rather a ridiculous proceeding.

Madame de Châteauroux now persuaded Louis XV. to make up once more to the King of Protestant Prussia, who, on account of his own free-thinking ideas, was greatly disliked by the Queen, the Princesses, and all the ultra-Catholic faction.

To win back Frederick to France, the favourite proposed that the brilliant free-thinking writer Voltaire should be sent to Berlin, unofficially. Frederick, who had been brought up on French literature, and who adored *les belles lettres*, welcomed Voltaire warmly, treating him as a personal friend. As he knew how greatly his English uncle hated him, how Maria Theresa also was plotting to dismember his Kingdom, Frederick determined once more that he required an ally. He therefore

listened readily to Voltaire, and again joined Catholic France, while drawing the Protestant countries of Sweden, Hesse, and the Palatinate after him into the union with a country which reckoned such a rabid ultramontane priest as Tencin among its principal counsellors.

Cardinal Tencin had a plan to which Louis now listened. This was to invade England and place Charles Edward Stuart, the Young Pretender, upon the British throne. While George II. withdrew from Flanders to defend his British dominions, Louis XV. imagined the idea of imitating his great grandfather Louis XIV., and making a sort of Royal progress into the Austrian possessions of the Low Countries.

In the same way as Louis XIV. had taken with him in his Royal coach into Flanders his Queen and two mistresses, Louise de la Vallière and the Marquise de Montespan, Louis XV. thought that he too would now prance off to an easy conquest while taking his favourite ladies with him. The Queen he decided to leave behind, but resolved to march into the Low Countries with the Duchesse de Châteauroux and her sister the Duchesse de Lauraguais.

The people of France were already raising an outcry against the King's mistresses, and calling the King incestuous. Taking advantage of this, the Comte de Maurepas thought to upset this little arrangement, which had doubtless originated in the



brain of his niece Marie Anne. He contrived to cause Louis XV. to start without her and her sister, when, with a very large army, he marched for Flanders. The Duchesse de Châteauroux was, however, a cunning young lady—more clever than her uncle by marriage.

Before the King left with his army she caused him to send Maurepas off on a tour of inspection of the south of France, while openly pretending very sadly to resign herself to the order of her Royal lover that she was to be left behind. The Queen, however, openly requested Louis to take her with him. He behaved brutally towards her, caused his patient spouse to remain standing in his presence at his *petit lever*, and one night left Versailles without either saying good-bye to her or informing Marie Lesczynska of the fact that he was to start at midnight to join the army.

No sooner had the King reached Valenciennes than the Duc de Richelieu, who was hand in glove with the King's chief favourite, wrote to her, advising her to come at once. Richelieu had his own reasons for this, as he found that the Duc de Noailles was becoming too strong for him with Louis XV.; but it had already been arranged between the Duc de Richelieu and Madame de Châteauroux that she was to take an early opportunity, in the absence of her enemy Maurepas, of rejoining the King.

Now occurred one of the strangest performances

on the part of some of the greatest ladies of France that perhaps ever was seen in that country. Richelieu, who had been the lover of the Duchess of Modena—the Regent's daughter—was no doubt at the bottom of the whole combination, while Marie Anne, of course, felt very sure of her ground before she acted as she did. The Duchesse de Châteauroux, taking with her three Princesses, the Duchess of Modena, the Princesse de Conti and her daughter, and a dozen other great ladies, including, of course, her sister, de Lauraguais, started openly for the seat of war.

These great ladies even had the effrontery before they started to proceed to the Queen, who had been ordered to remain behind, in order to take formal leave of her.

Marie Leszcynska on this occasion showed her dignity, behaving with such kindness to the two favourites as to shame them utterly. To the Regent's daughter she adopted a different tone, considering that from her birth and breeding the Duchess of Modena should have had more modesty than to run off after a man like the Duc de Richelieu, with whose name hers had formerly been so disgracefully coupled. He was, indeed, a noble who was the lover of every woman who sought to gain admission to the Court, where his power was so great that unless with his approval no lady could gain admittance. Knowing all this only too well, the Queen froze the Duchess of

Modena by remarking loudly in icy tones : " Make your idiotic journey as you choose ; it concerns me in no way whatever ! "

The ladies arrived at the seat of war in due course, but before long the soldiers of the army resented so greatly the presence of the Duchesse de Châteauroux and the Duchesse de Lauraguais that whenever they appeared ribald songs concerning them were loudly sung. Nor could the King avoid hearing these indecent ballads, with the result that he found the situation impossible. Louis, therefore, left the army, which had already taken various cities in its easy campaign, and took the sisters with him the best part of the way to Dunkirk, sending them on to that town, where, to their disgust, they found the Comte de Maurepas. Louis rejoined his troops in the Low Countries for a short time. Then, paying a visit to his two despondent ladies in Dunkirk, Louis XV. delighted their hearts by informing them that he could not do longer without them. He was about to travel all across France to Metz to join his army opposing the Austrians in Alsace, and said that they should come with him ! Also, just in case of accidents, he would take with him his father confessor, the Jesuit Père Pérusseau.

The scandal of the King's journey with the two sisters was only increased when, at Metz, he installed them in an Abbey, from which he made a long wooden gallery communicating with his own

apartments (August 1744). The King now fell ill, becoming worse daily—his illness having commenced after a midnight debauch, during which he drank too much wine.

The sisters at once refused to leave the bedside of the sick Monarch, keeping all away from Louis except the Duc de Richelieu and a few other persons partial to themselves. Soon, as the King appeared to be at the point of death, a tremendous dispute arose on the part of several members of the priesthood—Fitz-James, Bishop of Soissons, Père Pérusseau, and others—with the favourites. These churchmen refused to hear the King's confession or to administer absolution or the sacraments unless he consented to send away his two mistresses. The Duchesse de Châteauroux made a sturdy fight for what she considered her rights, the apparently dying King also resisted her being sent away from him. Louis likewise resisted making his confession, saying that the time had not yet come. The various Princes of the Blood at Metz and several great nobles were, with the priests, still excluded from the chamber of the sick Monarch; but at length all of the party opposed to the reign of Marie Anne combined against her and her supporter, the Duc de Richelieu.

Eventually, rather than allow the King to make his confession, the Duchesse de Châteauroux said that she would herself confess, and admit that she had sinned with Louis XV. "But," she added,

"there is surely an exception for kings, and that is no reason why I should be sent away."

The struggle ended in favour of the priests. After having been unconscious for some time Louis came to himself. He sent for the Duc de Bouillon, who had hitherto been one of those excluded, and for Père Pérusseau. In the name of religion, and as Very Christian King, Louis XV. then consented to sacrifice his favourites, to send them away, and to make his confession.

The triumphant Bishop of Soissons instantly ordered the wooden gallery by which the favourites entered the King's apartments to be broken down. It was not, however, until the furious Fitz-James had closed all the places of worship in Metz as a protest against them, and had further almost frightened the King into his grave, that Louis eventually told his obstinate mistresses that he preferred that they should leave Metz.

The Comte de Belle-Isle now handsomely provided the weeping Duchesse de Châteauroux, her sister and three of the greatest ladies, their friends, with his own coach, and sent them away from Metz, where their lives were, in fact, no longer safe.

When they had gone, the Bishop of Soissons brutally danced upon the penitent King, who had no strength to resist, and compelled him to request the Duc de Richelieu to take himself off to Switzerland.

The Church was triumphant—the mistresses and the Duc their friend were gone, but the King was



dying all the same ! When Louis XV. was, however, at the last gasp a quack was found who administered some remedy of his own. *Mirabile dictu'!* This acted like a charm and the King at once commenced to get well. Before many days Louis XV. was so much himself again as to show the greatest displeasure to his heir, the Dauphin, and the Dauphin's Governor, the Duc de Châtillon. Châtillon had brought the Prince against the King's orders to see his dying parent, and this was a crime which Louis, who detested his son, never forgave.

The King soon recovered completely, when, like the brute that he was, he at once behaved abominably to the Queen, who had come to his bedside, and whose forgiveness he had craved when he thought himself about to die.

Rejoining the army, Louis was present at the capitulation of Freiburg, after which triumph he returned to Paris, on his way paying a visit to King Stanislas at Lunéville. At Paris the King received a great ovation. The people, who had turned to him in his illness, were also delighted at his conduct in sending away the Duchesse de Châteauroux, the haughty, if unrecognised, daughter of M. le Duc de Bourbon.

The King, however, had not forgotten his love—one who considered herself of the Blood-Royal like himself. It was, however, owing to the Queen's foolish action that he soon turned towards the Duchesse once more.



Seeking admission to the apartments of the Queen on the night of November 14, 1744, Marie Lesczynska by some unfortunate inspiration ordered her ladies not to open the door to the King in a hurry. Not obtaining instant accession to his wife, Louis left the Tuileries in a rage, and went off to the private residence of Madame de Châteauroux in the Rue de Bac. He begged her to return to the Court, but at first she haughtily replied that she had too many scores to pay off, and that it would "cause too many heads to fall" should she consent so to do. Only when Louis XV. had promised to punish Maurepas, to exile the Bishop of Soissons and others, would Marie Anne even consent to Louis XV. remaining for the night in her house.

The King feebly agreeing that the Comte de Maurepas should be ordered to come on the morrow to make a humiliating apology to his niece, the Duchesse allowed Louis XV. to stay with her in the Rue de Bac.

Upon the following day Madame de Châteauroux became ill with fever, not so ill, however, but that she was able to receive Maurepas like a dog, and to drive him from her presence when he came to offer his abject apology for his past treatment of his niece.

For a month, during which Louis XV. caused prayers to be offered up for her recovery in all the churches in Paris, Marie Anne's fever continued.

Then, after having seen all of her enemies humiliated or exiled, the Duchesse de Châteauroux died. During the course of her illness she stoutly maintained that the sole cause of her suffering was poison, which had been administered to her by the Comte de Maurepas.

Before her death the unfortunate young Duchesse had had a touching reconciliation with her sister the Comtesse de Mailly, whose pardon she humbly begged for having so cruelly supplanted her.

Louis XV. had always addressed the widow of the Marquis Jean Louis de la Tournelle as "Princesse," thus recognising her as of the Condé family, and when she had passed away, so great was the respect shown and the sympathy openly tendered to the King in his loss, that the Duchesse might well have been one of the Princesses of the Blood.

Louis XV. having retired to the Trianon to grieve, the Queen generously wrote to him, to ask permission to come and share his tears. While curtly answering and ordering Marie Lesczynska to remain away, the King did not refuse the ministrations of the Duchess of Modena and other ladies of the highest rank. Nor did he withhold his gracious permission when that great Prince of the Blood, the Duc de Chartres, requested "as a relative of the dead Duchesse" to be allowed to wear mourning for her!

It is not to be supposed that during the triumphant career of the Duchesse de Châteauroux there

had not been other ladies ready and willing to storm the fort, which, with the sole exception of her sister, de Lauraguais, she held against all comers. There was one such waiting, who from childhood had been brought up by her mother to become the King's mistress, and who, although she had not as yet had an opportunity of setting her cap at Louis, was the object of jealous suspicion of the wide-awake Marie Anne. The lady in question was merely an elegant *bourgeoise*, but when the King's haughty favourite heard the Duchesse de Chevreuse praising up the charms of the young Madame d'Étioles to Louis, she thought it wiser at once to nip the affair in the bud.

Madame de Châteauroux understood the spite which animated the Duchesse de Chevreuse in endeavouring thus to attract the King's attention to a possible rival. She likewise knew that that lady suffered from a very bad corn, and upon which foot it was. Crossing to where she was standing talking to Louis XV., Marie Anne stamped savagely with her high-heeled shoe upon the corn of the Duchesse de Chevreuse! After an agonised scream, the unfortunate woman fell down in a faint and had to be carried out from the Royal presence.

By this prompt action was effectually quelled any further intentions that might have been nurtured of supplanting the Duchesse de Châteauroux.

When she died, the vengeance which she had

exacted for the successful efforts of her enemies to drive her away from Metz did not die with her. The Duc de la Rochefoucauld was for long left in a close exile at Rocheguyon, while the Duc de Bouillon—a Prince of the Blood—was sent to an ancient castle in Albret, the birthplace of Henri IV. This tumble-down building was a mass of mould and damp, not having been inhabited for two hundred years. The Jesuit Pérusseu likewise suffered the King's displeasure.

Fitz-James, the Bishop of Soissons, was, however, the most severely punished. By the influence of his relative, the Young Pretender, he was about to receive the Cardinal's hat. This Louis refused him, as his subject, permission to accept, while banishing him for life from Paris and Versailles.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### Mademoiselle Lecouvreur and the Duchesse de Bouillon

WHEN the Duchesse de Châteauroux had been for a short time peaceably at rest in the chapel of Saint Michel at Saint-Sulpice, Louis XV., who so dearly loved the family de Nesle, found that the Duchesse de Lauraguais alone could not satisfy him. He therefore sent the Duc de Richelieu to Madame de Flavacourt, to beg this fifth daughter of the Marquise de Nesle to change her mind concerning himself. He was in great need of consolation! Would not Hortense Félicité come and console him?

After having listened to the great offers that the Duc had to make to her on behalf of the King, Hortense Félicité, as bland as ever, explained to that great noble that, much as she shared the King's grief at her sister's loss, she really felt that she was not adapted to the rôle of *consolatrice*. As for the offers that were made to her, she added, if that were all, she would rather retain the good opinion of her contemporaries.

Thus Louis XV. terminated his official connection

with the Nesle family, for if he continued to see the Duchesse de Lauraguais, it was only occasionally, and she had no weight whatever upon the Councils of the State. The Duchesse de Châteauroux died, aged twenty-seven, at the end of the year 1744, and in the spring of the following year Louis joined his armies under command of the Maréchal Maurice de Saxe in the Low Countries. In the month of May, both the King and the Dauphin were present at, although they took no active part in, the sanguinary battle of Fontenoy, in which, although eventually compelled to retire, the English and Hanoverian infantry made their names glorious by their long-continued steadiness against overwhelming odds.

If the battle were won by the French in the end, owing to the good generalship of Saxe, although he was suffering agonies from dropsy during its continuance, the whole affair was one of touch and go, and many of the French troops fled before it was terminated.

Maurice de Saxe was a remarkable man, and the illegitimate son of a King. His father was likewise the father of about three hundred other children, by the ladies of his Courts and others. He was the Elector Frederick Augustus of Saxony, who became King Augustus II. of Poland, while continuing to rule Saxony also. The mother of Maurice de Saxe was the beautiful Countess of Königsmark, a Swedish lady, and her son had a remarkable train-



ing. Instead of being at school, at the age of twelve the boy was already a soldier, fighting under Prince Eugène for the Austrians in some of the bloodiest battles and sieges which marked the opening of the eighteenth century.

At the early age of fifteen the young soldier was given command of a fine cavalry corps, which he constantly led into action with most distinguished bravery in various parts of Europe, frequently being engaged against the Turks in Hungary.

The gallant young fellow then had the fortune to become beloved of a great Princess, considerably his senior, Anna Ivanovna, the niece of Peter the Great. This great lady was the ruler of the Duchy of Courland, to-day a part of Russia, but which in her time was nominally a fief of the Polish Kingdom. As she succeeded to the throne of Russia she determined to make her boy-lover the ruler of Courland, and Saxe was actually elected Duke of that country. When the Empress Anna found, however, that the manly young Duke preferred to make sweethearts of ladies younger than herself, she sent her new paramour, an adventurer named Biron with sanguinary instincts, to replace Maurice in Courland. In this action Anna was aided by the young man's father, Augustus II., who was jealous of his brilliant son.

Still quite young, Maurice then came to France and offered his sword to the Regent, Philippe d'Orléans, who gladly gave him a regiment, which

he soon brought to a pitch of the highest proficiency. The Regent dying, Saxe remained in the French service, while at Paris, owing to his handsome bearing and brilliant reputation, some of the greatest ladies soon endeavoured to enrol him among the list of their admirers.

The action of these *grandes dames* was doubtless in most instances the result of their vanity, but the young soldier soon had the good fortune to attract the favour of a charming creature, who loved him tenderly for his own sake alone.

There was then in Paris a celebrated actress, to whom Voltaire, in whose tragedies she occupied the principal rôles, professed the most unbounded devotion. The great writer was not, however, selfish, and when he found that the actress had made her hero of Maurice de Saxe, he was content to remain merely the confidant of her love.

She was Mademoiselle Lecouvreur, of whom it was said that she was "a rare person, admired and adored, and, what was more, esteemed." She acted the Jocaste of Voltaire's *Œdipe* with such wonderful truth and fire that even the author was ready to concede that Mademoiselle Lecouvreur was "not an actress but the heroine herself."

She was indeed the acknowledged flower of the Stage; until her time France had seen nothing like her.

Beautiful and refined, polished and well read, when Mademoiselle Lecouvreur had given her

heart to the brilliant soldier she determined to raise him to her own level of refinement.

Utterly unselfish where the man whom she loved was concerned, the Queen of Tragedy by no means sought for ever to bind him to her side. On the contrary, she fed his ambition, advised him to make some very great marriage; if he could not bring himself to marry the Empress Anna, to unite himself to some other member of an Imperial family. In order to fit her hero for the high station for which she considered him destined, Mademoiselle Lecouvreur undertook the so greatly neglected education of the Duke of Courland. She found too much of the rough soldier about him, and indeed how could it well be otherwise when he had been flung into all the savagery of the camp and scenes of furious war at such an early age?

By her polished influence, Mademoiselle Lecouvreur before long endowed the warrior-Prince of her choice with much of her own cultured Parisian grace. She succeeded so greatly in her efforts with Saxe, naturally a man of brilliant parts, that he became devoted to literature, became, indeed, an author himself, and published a book in five volumes, to which he gave the title of *Mes Rêveries*.

These "dreams" of a young soldier who was yet the veteran of many battles had in them, as might have been expected, much concerning the art of war.

They also referred to the policy of Europe, nor did he shrink from advocating a very bold policy in the pages of his work. This was to wrest Poland from the Saxon father who had behaved in such an unnatural manner towards himself in his capacity of Sovereign of Courland.

Maurice de Saxe declared himself as willing and able to effect this conquest of Poland, while saying that to do so he would not require a single sou from France, from which it must be concluded that he had made up his mind to accept the hand of some great Princess.

Without ever attempting to carry out this scheme, he did leave Paris in order to attempt to wrest Courland from Biron. This Biron, who, in spite of the greatness to which he was raised and the cruelties in which he indulged in Russia—such as causing thousands of heads to fall and freezing his enemies in a state of nudity under a pump in winter time—had his own vicissitudes. For some time he tasted the pleasures of a prison in Siberia, and at another time was in exile. His granddaughter, the Duchesse de Sagan, who lived to a good old age, was a remarkable figure in Parisian society almost to the end of the nineteenth century.

It was when Maurice de Saxe started for Courland that Mademoiselle Lecouvreur showed the unselfishness of which she was capable. In order that her hero should cut a good figure in his ex-

pedition, she sold all her diamonds, jewels, and silver, and forced Saxe to accept the proceeds. For a time he made himself the master of his Duchy, but the combined weight of Poland and Russia was too great for the final success of his undertaking.

After going through wonderful adventures and numerous romantic hair-breadth escapes, the Duke of Courland was compelled to return to Paris, without a Duchy.

In that city he was, however, now more of a lion than ever, for Europe was ringing with his exploits.

Unfortunately for the woman who had done so much for her lover, a very great lady now made a determined attempt to tear this hero of romance from the arms of the great actress.

She was the young Duchesse de Bouillon, a Princess of the House of Lorraine, and as beautiful as she proved shameless and unprincipled.

Maurice de Saxe had, unfortunately, too much of the ardent nature of his father in him entirely to avoid the arms of this Princess, which were opened to him so wide and so caressingly.

Owing to the singular sweetness of her disposition, the star of an enthusiastic Paris showed for some time no jealousy. So that her lover enjoyed himself by accepting the adulation offered at his shrine, she expressed herself happy. But there was one thing to which Mademoiselle Lecouvreur could not



submit, this was that he should be torn from her altogether.

It was at this, however, that the Duchesse de Bouillon aimed ; moreover, she commenced to treat the devoted actress cruelly, from her box hissing her with her friends during her finest performances.

All Paris and Versailles were soon, perforce, aware of the rivalry of the Duchesse and the actress, and the popular sympathy was by no means upon the side of the woman who considered herself "a great lady."

So great was the sympathy for Mademoiselle Lecouvreur that some of the best-known nobles in France now came forward and showed their willingness to withdraw her from an unpleasant situation by offering her their hands and hearts. The ravishing actress remained, however, true to the great Saxe, who at this moment was being ardently sought by Spain to head an expedition into Great Britain, with the object of placing the Young Pretender upon the throne.

Even when she became aware of the fact that the Duchesse de Bouillon was seeking to cause her death by poison, the Queen of Tragedy refused the hand of the amiable Comte d'Argental, and of the not so honest but more powerful Comte Marc Pierre d'Argenson.

She declared her intention of fighting for her love until her death, and this before long she knew to be inevitable. Within a few days two attempts were



made upon her life. An abbé offered her some of the pastilles which were at that period very much *à la mode*. These Mademoiselle Lecouvreur accepted with apparent gratitude, but when the suave abbé had taken his departure she thought it as well to have them analysed, when they were found to be rank poison! An artist, painting her portrait shortly afterwards, told her that he had been commissioned by the Duchesse de Bouillon to compass her death, but that it was far from his heart to contemplate poisoning so adorable a creature. The Duchesse de Bouillon procured a *lettre de cachet* for this honest painter, and caused him to be flung into the worst prison in Paris, that horrible sink of iniquity Saint-Lazare, where he remained!

Actions like this on the part of the women of France it was that hurried on the sanguinary revenge taken on the nobility by the people in the French Revolution.

Driven to retaliation, while making her will with the assistance of the Comte d'Argental and Voltaire, Mademoiselle Lecouvreur sought her revenge from the stage.

The great *tragédienne* was playing the part of Phèdre, when the Duchesse de Bouillon made herself conspicuous among a number of ladies in her box by contemptuous smiles and obviously scornful remarks concerning her rival, of whom she made an object of derision.

Advancing to the footlights, and fixing the inso-

lent Princess with her piercing gaze, the actress, enunciating every word distinctly, addressed the woman who sought her death in order to steal her lover. She made use of some appropriate lines from her part, and never was tragedy more aptly expressed upon the face than when, in her ringing notes which pierced like steel, Mademoiselle Lecouvreur uttered the following verse :

“Je ne suis point de ces femmes hardies  
Qui portant dans le crime une tranquille paix,  
Ont su se faire un front qui ne rougit jamais.”

The audience saw the allusion, and rising to their feet jeered at the Duchesse, while wildly applauding the noble woman by whom these lines were uttered.

The Duchesse, publicly shamed for the moment, had her revenge. A few days later Mademoiselle Lecouvreur was dying in agony as the result of poison! She expired while declaring that Maurice de Saxe was “her universe, her hope, her God!”

## CHAPTER XXIX

### Madame d'Étioles (Marquise de Pompadour)

THE young lady whom the Duchesse de Chevreuse was praising up to the King when, in order to keep her mouth shut, the Duchesse de Châteauroux stamped savagely upon her corn, was Madame d'Étioles.

The name by which she was known before her marriage was a common one, Mademoiselle Poisson or Miss Fish. For the woman who was to blossom out later into the Marquise de Pompadour, taking the ancient title of a noble who was still living when she was married, was of distinctly *bourgeois* origin on both sides. It does not, however, at all follow as a matter of course that the army contractor Poisson, a man who was once actually sentenced to be hanged for purloining stores, was the father of the little girl born in Paris in the year 1720. Her contemporaries, such as Voltaire, all credit her with another male parent, the general opinion having been in favour of the rich farmer-general of the taxes, Lenormant de Tourneheim, by whom she was supplied with every

advantage of education. Other rich middle-class persons with whom she was connected were the brothers Pâris-Duverney, two of whom were her godfathers.

To understand a little of the truth of the early life of the siren who was for so long to exercise so much influence upon Louis XV., and through him upon the policies of France, one cannot do better than study the pages of Voltaire, himself a man of plebeian birth, with whom in her early life she was intimate.

This brilliant genius and impudent wit had himself no right to the name by which he became so distinguished, his real names having been François Marie d'Arouet. Thinking Arouet too plebeian, while still a young man of about twenty occupying his time as a prisoner in the Bastille by writing his epic of Henri IV., the *Henriade*, the poet boldly changed his name to de Voltaire.

With the celebrated Crébillon, the witty free-thinker Fontenelle, who once had been a lover of Madame de Prie, and that interesting man the chronicler Duclos, Voltaire was often to be seen as a visitor in the hôtel in which Jeanne Poisson was brought up, while being instructed in painting, dancing, music, and literature. These brilliant men, then young themselves, found the sixteen-year-old girl both pretty and an agreeable chatterbox. She was already at that early age doing her best to profit by the liberal education she received, which was,

according to her scheming mother, to make of her a *morceau de roi*—a piece fit for a king!

Ten years younger than Louis XV., and with a very good opinion of herself, Jeanne Poisson was determined even in her maiden days to become the King's mistress, and never ceased scheming to attract his attention until she accomplished her object. Despite her lowly birth, so different from the distinguished parentage of the haughty Duchesse de Châteauroux and her sisters, Jeanne posed long before he had ever addressed her as being enamoured of the handsome Louis, openly saying that she was *amoureuse du roi*, and would make him love her. In Voltaire's *Memoirs* he speaks of this. We will therefore quote from them some interesting details concerning this clever woman, as without principle as she was without mercy when she became powerful, and without a heart.

"She confessed to me," says the author of the *Henriade*, "that she had a secret presentiment that the King would fall in love with her, and that she had a violent inclination for him. Well, how was the throne of France to be reached, the very idea of which made her head turn? In the meantime, full of genius, always admired, always listened to, she familiarised herself with the life of a beautiful Queen; she saw at her feet all the worshippers of her father's fortune, she gathered about her poets, artists, and philosophers, over whom she already threw a Royal protection.

“ The farmer-general had a nephew, Lenormant d'Étioles. He was an amiable young man and had the manners of a gentleman ; he was also heir to the immense fortune of the farmer-general, at least according to the law. Jeanne, on her side, had some claim to a share of this fortune. It was a very simple way of making all agreed by marrying the young people. Jeanne, as we have already seen, was already in love with the King ; she married d'Étioles without changing her point of view. Versailles, Versailles—that was her only horizon !

“ Her young husband became desperately enamoured of her, but this passion of his, almost amounting to madness, she never felt in the least. She accepted it as a misfortune that could not last long. The hôtel of the newly married couple, Rue Croix des Petits Champs, was established on a lordly footing, the best company in Paris left the fashionable salons for that of Madame d'Étioles ; until that time there had never been such a gorgeous display of luxury in France.

“ The young bride hoped by this means to make something of a noise at the Court, and thus excite the curiosity of the King. Day after day passed away in feasts and brilliant entertainments. Celebrated actors, poets, artists, and foreigners made their rendezvous at this hôtel, the mistress of which was its life and ornament ; in one word, all the world went there but the King.

“ The Abbé Bernis was the Abbé of Madame



d'Étioles ; he had no other abbey or benefice ! Did the Abbé and the mistress of the hôtel suspect that in ten years' time they would rule over France as Ministers with absolute power ?

“ There was also among this celebrated circle a good-looking and good-natured pagan, who went by the name of *Gentil* Bernard. Madame d'Étioles treated him like a child, but he was the la Fontaine without genius of a la Sablière without virtue. He was thought to be in some degree her lover ; he did not, however, become Minister with her. She had nevertheless the memory of the heart—she made him the librarian to the King.

“ Madame d'Étioles swore fidelity to her husband, ‘ provided the King did not make love to her.’ The husband laughed at this reservation. It was first talked about at home, in their house—and the rumour reached Versailles. The King said in joke, ‘ I would like to see the husband.’

“ M. d'Étioles had a deserted château in the forest of Sénart. Madame d'Étioles, having heard that the King often hunted in that forest, told her husband that the physicians recommended her the forest air for her nervous attacks. Her husband, not foreseeing his wife's design, furnished the château with great luxury. Once installed in her new quarters, Madame d'Étioles ordered three or four carriages of a light, fairy-like build in order to take the air for her attacks of the vapours. As she was always on the watch she often met the

King in the forest. 'What a beautiful phaeton!' he said, meeting her for the third time. Finally he noticed her, but confined himself to a remark on her good looks.

"One afternoon during a rainstorm the King entered the Château d'Étioles, but Madame de Châteauroux was with him. Madame d'Étioles was not disheartened; she continued to pass before the eyes of the Royal hunter, sometimes like a goddess descended from heaven, at one time dressed in an azure robe seated in a rose-coloured phaeton, at another dressed in rose colour in an azure phaeton."

In spite of all her persistency, and the fact of her being successful in drawing great nobles of the Court like the Duc de Richelieu to her forest château, Madame d'Étioles did not succeed in becoming unfaithful to her husband. For two years the Duchesse de Châteauroux kept a watchful eye upon the manœuvres of the *intrigante*, and the only marvel is that the imperious daughter of M. le Duc, who brought all of her enemies to her feet, did not send Madame d'Étioles to the Bastille by a *lettre de cachet*. However, whatever she might have done had she lived after her reconciliation with Louis XV. in Paris, the life of the unfortunate Marie Anne was cut short too soon. She died, and the meretricious Jeanne Poisson breathed freely, for with the watchdog dead access to the kennel became more easy. The plebeian

jewel that had been so highly polished for a King to wear now thought that its chance was greatly improved of before long displaying its lustre upon that Monarch's Crown.

The methods now taken by Madame d'Étioles were more direct, and likewise more disgusting. To get at the King she made a disgraceful bargain with his equerry, M. de Briges. From the arms of this nobleman she was passed on to those of the King, who accepted her one night from his equerry out of curiosity. Nor was Louis XV. at first overjoyed at the prize that had been given to him. He was not particularly attracted by Madame d'Étioles, who was already the mother of two children, and for a time, to her great chagrin, Louis appeared completely to forget her existence.

Jeanne Poisson was not, however, one to give up that which she had already imagined to be within her grasp. She had plenty of money, which, judiciously employed, procured her friends at the Court. Her female cunning was, moreover, acute, and she devised a plan to further arouse the King's interest, even his compassion towards herself. Madame d'Étioles employed her friends at Versailles to represent her to the King as now leading a terrible life owing to her husband's jealousy of His Majesty. While she, poor woman! adored the King to the verge of idolatry, this brute of a husband led her a dog's life, kicked her, beat her, tore her hair out, threatened her with death, and

a hundred other terrible things! All this the King was informed she endured patiently for his sake; even if she should be done to death upon his account she felt that she would not have lived in vain.

The vanity of Louis XV. was aroused. What! a woman could love him like this! It was, then, a shame to allow her thus to be tortured by a jealous beast of a husband. Further, if some one else considered her so desirable, possibly Madame d'Étioles might really be worth possessing, after all! "Bring the poor woman to me again," remarked Louis XV. to M. de Briges. "From her own lips I would learn more of the miseries that she has been made to endure upon my account."

The King did not receive Madame d'Étioles alone at the little supper to which he asked her, but had present with them at the festive board that celebrated connoisseur in women, the Duc de Richelieu.

When the Duc had discreetly retired Madame d'Étioles had her opportunity, and took advantage of it. With such terror did she depict the fate awaiting her upon her return to her husband that she persuaded the King to keep her—conceal her somewhere where M. d'Étioles could not possibly find her.

For three days the King kept Madame d'Étioles closely concealed at Versailles, and then, openly declaring her his mistress, he kept her—for twenty

years! By a patent dated May 6, 1745, Louis created his new favourite Marquise de Pompadour; and upon the 9th of that same month, two days before Fontenoy, he took her with him to the seat of war.

## CHAPTER XXX

### Madame Henriette and Madame Adélaïde

THAT charming writer of the early nineteenth century, Arsène Houssaye, gives a descriptive picture of Madame de Pompadour which seems convincing. He writes as follows :

“ Louis XV., the son of a King, was born a farmer-general, that is to say, to sup well, love women, pleasure, and money. Madame de Pompadour, the daughter of a farmer-general, was born a Queen, loving power, luxury, the fine arts, everything that belongs to the splendour of Royalty. The history of Madame de Pompadour is unknown in its details ; it is, however, a name that radiates upon the past century with more brightness than the name of Louis XV. Some have exalted her virtues, others exaggerated her crimes ; both are in error.

“ But how fathom the depths of the dark ambition of her heart, which wore the mask of a perpetual smile ? Ask Vanloo, la Tour, Boucher, if they could ever, when she sat for them, detect any of the secrets of her love or her policy.”





M<sup>me</sup>. DE POMPADOUR.

MADAME DE POMPADOUR

By Belliard



In this last sentence Houssaye is perhaps somewhat carried away by the flow of his facile pen, for both the loves—if they be indeed worthy of the name—and the policies of Jeanne Poisson, when promoted to regal magnificence, became only too apparent to the world in which she lived. The sordid affair with M. de Briges, for instance, as that with the Abbé Bernis and others, could not remain secrets, while her Austrian policy affected Europe.

In personal appearance and bearing she is said to have possessed in her early years brilliancy, charm, and gaiety; there was none at the Court with such attractive features or with so graceful a figure. Thus when Madame Poisson had been in the habit of remarking enthusiastically of Jeanne, "A King alone is worthy of my daughter," she was perhaps not so far wrong in a day when Kings selected the fairest flowers from among the womanhood of their subjects.

As we have seen, Madame de Pompadour first became the King's favourite at a time when France was involved in a prolonged war with England and Austria. Her position at first being merely that which she had made for herself, the plaything of Louis XV., she in no way affected the half-hearted assistance given by France to Charles Edward Stuart for his invasion of Scotland in 1745.

After his defeat at Culloden Moor in April 1746, this Prince, having escaped to France, was received with great favour at Versailles. Here, although

meeting the King's new favourite frequently and acknowledging her sportive charm, the lively Charles Stuart was wise enough not to pay her so much attention as to antagonise the King. He was thus allowed to remain in Paris and, while assisted with French money, to live in his own way, which was one of wild dissipation. He was the hero of various romantic liaisons, while his gambling escapades became notorious.

Louis XV. and his Ministers were then greatly inclined to give to the Young Pretender further and more valuable assistance than the few volunteers, the arms, money, and two ships with which he had been helped in the fruitless "'45" expedition.

Charles Edward found, however, that he would not receive this aid without a good *quid pro quo*, and the cession of Ireland demanded from him by France was too much for the heir of the Stuarts to agree to.

After having been for a time to the Court of Spain, where he received a right Royal welcome and promises of help which came to nothing, the handsome claimant of the British throne returned to his beloved Paris. There he proceeded to enjoy himself as before, but, after the conclusion of the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle, despite his violent protests, he was not to be allowed to remain in his favourite city, as England insisted upon his expulsion from France.

One of the principal reasons why for a time the

former Madame d'Étioles remained without the slightest political significance, was the presence of two strong men, but of very different characters, in the Ministry. These were the two brothers d'Argenson, of whom the younger, the wily and self-seeking Comte Marc Pierre, was Minister of War, while the honest and able elder, the Marquis Louis de Voyer, held the very important position of Minister of Foreign Affairs. While the latter always held far too good an opinion of the secret good qualities of Louis XV., attributing all of his errors and failings to his mistresses and bad counsellors, not excepting his brother, he was unfortunately usually overruled, to the misfortune of France. In his diary in September 1745, four months after Fontenoy, we find the following :

“ In the King's Council, mistrust, suspicion are fanatical passions. Every one judges his neighbour by his own measure. I have a bad opinion of those suspicious people who deny the existence of pure virtue. My *confrères* are the sweetest and most honest scoundrels ever known. The King resembles the Almighty, who sees all, listens, and never says a word. It is true that he lets off occasionally a few thunderbolts, some influences, but no concert, no direction. The secondary causes are mistresses, and antagonistic. Hence trouble and confusion. M. le Dauphin is at the same time dissipated and a man of retirement. I found upon arrival in the Ministry our Kingdom

governed by vulgarians. No great ideas! there was a horror of justice, a passion for suspicions, an inclination to treason under the pretence of cleverness.

“Superiority of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs above all the others! Herein lies the super-excellence of my charge over the other departments. I say to them: ‘You—you will keep the money, you the navy, you the troops, and I the reputation of the State, above everything its reputation for probity and good faith. In behaving thus all will go well.’ And if it be true that the fault of our Government is that each one works for himself, only speaking up for his own charge, and that under a King of middling solicitude this fault has its dangers, I will do like the rest. I will work for my greatest and best reputation, by which I shall be able to do without all the rest—troops, Royal ships, and even money for the external affairs.”

Poor worthy d’Argenson! if only he had been oftener listened to, how much he would have saved France! Not only, moreover, in the lives of her valiant sons, but in the money, which under the régime of Madame de Pompadour was so uselessly expended for the external affairs, in huge subsidies to Austria and lesser States. His object was to keep down the extravagant Royal expenditure, to stop the wars of aggression, to turn the regular troops into a standing militia for the purely defensive



purposes of his country. Above everything, the Marquis preached the necessity of France re-establishing and preserving a reputation for good faith.

He spoke thus, while urging an alliance with Holland and other Protestant countries, even before the battle of Fontenoy, at which both he and his brother were present. But his proposition for a league of peace was never for long listened to. His honesty of purpose was too great for his contemporaries, above all too great for a King with a hoggish mind falling gradually more and more under petticoat influence of some kind, especially under the sway of a Pompadour. Thus the determined and clever manœuvres of d'Argenson to bring about peace in Europe, an honourable peace for France, were constantly defeated, although at one time he was nearly successful. The King's eldest daughter Louise Élizabeth, married to the Infante Don Philip of Spain, proved, however, one very disturbing influence. Louis XV. was particularly partial to this Princess, and therefore when he had agreed to d'Argenson's plan to deprive her husband of the Duchy which he had been given of Milan, even although Spain was to obtain other advantages in exchange, the King weakened somewhat before his daughter's entreaties. The Queen, Madame Henriette, and others of the Court joined the Spanish Ambassador in opposing the Marquis, according to whom, they came "howling" to the

King. The delay thus caused lasted until the King of Sardinia, whom d'Argenson had won over for France, found the Austrians in his Piedmontese States. He was compelled then to aid them, with the result that the French Lieutenant-Général de Montal was surprised, and all of his army captured, at Asti in northern Italy. Then, only two days too late, the Infanta's mother-in-law, Queen Elizabeth Farnese of Spain, sent messengers to the King of Sardinia to say that she and her son Ferdinand VI. agreed to the Marquis d'Argenson's secret treaty with him for the utter confounding of Austria. The damage was, however, already done, and the French and Spanish were utterly crushed in Italy.

Madame de Pompadour now stirred up the King to personally conduct a new expedition into Flanders. He proceeded there for a time with a large army in 1746, but, not having this time taken his fair mistress to the war, he soon missed her so much that he left his troops and returned to Jeanne at Versailles. There she proceeded to employ the rest of the year in the organising of elaborate and expensive fêtes for the amusement of the King. Her genius as an organiser of these extravagant entertainments was great, and thus soon the Marquise de Pompadour contrived to get rid of a great deal of the money which was being ruthlessly dragged from the pockets of the poorer classes throughout the Kingdom to support the terrible expenses of the war.

Philip V., the French King of Spain, who was the uncle of Louis XV., had recently died (1746). One of his daughters, who had been married to the Dauphin, also died childless at Versailles. Thereupon the widowed Queen, Elizabeth Farnese, sought to impose her younger daughter Antonia upon the Dauphin. Louis XV. had no particular objection to the proposed incestuous connection, indeed his unhappy Queen Marie Lesczynska was greatly shocked at his conduct at this very time with his too pliant daughter Madame Henriette, and that in spite of the assured position of Madame de Pompadour. The Marquis d'Argenson, however, proved too strong in the matter for the Dauphin to be allowed to marry his deceased wife's sister. He mistrusted Spanish Princesses in general, and therefore caused the King to write and decline the offer upon the grounds of its being incestuous. This reply made the Dowager Queen of Spain wild with fury. It was, however, all in vain for her to point to the King's own evil conduct with the four sisters of the Nesle family, for d'Argenson had the ear of Louis XV. in this matter. The Marquis argued: "One of these Spanish Princesses has given no children to France, another may prove equally childless. Now what we want is a fruitful Princess. What stock in the whole of Europe could be more fruitful than that of the Saxon, Augustus II. of Poland, who half peopled Europe with his illegitimate children? Let us therefore

disregard the fact of Saxony being at war with us as the ally of Austria, and ask for a Saxon Princess, one of the granddaughters of the gay Augustus II. There is one named Maria Josepha who would just do. Her sister is married to Don Carlos of Spain, and has a child annually. Upon the same principle that I resist a Spanish Princess, because her sister bore no children, I now argue in favour of a Saxon one, because her sister is prolific—it is evidently in the race. The marriage will, moreover, stop the war with Saxony.”

Madame de Pompadour, advised by her godfathers, the brothers Pâris-Duverney, recommended the King, on the contrary, to take a Princess from Savoy for his son, the daughter of Charles Emanuel III., King of Sardinia. The Savoyard troops had, however, when Charles Emanuel had been on the point of concluding the secret treaty as arranged by d'Argenson, recently fired on the retreating French forces. Louis XV. agreed with his Minister of Foreign Affairs that this had been a bit too much. The King would not therefore listen to the counsels of his mistress, and flouted the offers of a daughter of Savoy being made semi-officially at that very moment through the Princesse de Carignan and, another Savoyard agent, the Sieur de Montgardin.

The Queen had also been favourable to the marriage with Catholic Savoy, and the bigoted Dauphin himself likewise, who did not wish to marry a Saxon Princess.

D'Argenson, however, carried the day, and the marriage was celebrated by proxy at Dresden, to which place M. de Paulmy, the son of the Marquis, had been sent to fetch the bride and bring her to Versailles.

At this very moment, the combined influences and jealousies against the honest and truly great d'Argenson brought about his downfall. Upon the day of the marriage he was dismissed from his office as Minister of Foreign Affairs. He retained his Ministerial rank as a Secretary of State for the rest of his life, but never held office again.

The Dauphin soon, however, learned to love his new wife, who proved as fruitful as d'Argenson had anticipated, Maria Josepha becoming the mother of three sons and two daughters, of whom all the sons became Kings of France and one of the daughters Duchess of Savoy.

The part played by Louis the Dauphin was at this time most despicable where his sister Henriette was concerned.

In considering the conduct of this Prince, who died in the year 1765, it must, however, be remembered that he was still quite young, and was made a peg to hang a hat on by the Court party of the so-called devout, who named themselves the *honnêtes gens*.

Absolutely without influence with his father, the young Prince now sought to gain that which he



could not win otherwise by an infamous use of his sister, Madame Henriette, who, although two years his senior, was absolutely under his thumb. The Dauphin pushed Henriette to pander to all of her father's worst vices. Now, in her own apartments, she gave suppers to Louis which degenerated into nothing but orgies. Without any complaint the girl suffered all the caprices of her debauched parent, who, treating her as a lover, distinguished her so much at the Court as momentarily quite to eclipse the *bourgeoise* Madame de Pompadour.

This was the object aimed at by the *honnêtes gens*. So that the King's *maîtresse en titre* were thrown into the shade, what cared they how that twenty-year-old Princess, Madame Henriette, might debase herself? The King, in the pleasure that he took with Henriette, sought to establish her magnificently. He endowed her with a Household of her own upon Royal proportions, one that totally eclipsed that of her mother the Queen. She was given an enormous suite of grand officers, while many ladies of honour formed part of her brilliant retinue.

Henriette had, however, a good heart, and endeavoured to make up to her mother the Queen for the wrong that she did her. Accordingly she used her power over Louis by insisting upon his treating Marie Lesczynska with more consideration than hitherto. Above all, she obtained the temporary eclipse of Madame de Pompadour upon the



first day of January 1747. The Marquise then expected to be distinguished by the receipt of a magnificent New Year's gift from the King. To the delight of the Dauphin and the party of the *honnêtes gens*, the Marquise was disappointed. While the Queen received as her *étrennes* a splendid present from Louis XV., the Marquise de Pompadour got nothing!

Marie Lesczynska did not, however, bear her daughter any gratitude, for she had already learned, poor woman, to despise her daughters and their ways. Her intimate friend, the Duc de Luynes, says that it was with great difficulty that she even forced herself to receive their kiss of ceremony when, as a matter of duty, they came to pay their respects to her. For of life in common with Madame Henriette and her other daughters the Queen had none.

At the end of 1747 Europe was wearied of the War of the Austrian Succession. Indeed, every one had forgotten the very cause of its origin, which had been the Pragmatic Sanction, by which the Emperor Charles VI. had, in spite of the Salic Law, left all of his hereditary dominions to his daughter Maria Theresa, who had now become an Empress.

Among those who had come badly off of late was the King's eldest daughter, the Infanta Louise Élizabeth. Although her husband, Don Philip, had earlier caused himself to be crowned at Milan

with the Iron Crown of Lombardy, the Austrians had turned him out.

His eldest brother Ferdinand had become King of Spain, his second brother Carlos King of the two Sicilies, while Philip and Louise Élizabeth were now left without even an Italian duchy to bless themselves with.

The King's eldest daughter, who was less than a year older than Henriette, thought that the best thing that she could now do would be to return to France, especially as she was jealous of the reports which she heard of the supremacy of Madame Henriette, and imagined that she would like to supplant her in the King's affections, possibly in a manner to result in her own advantage later on.

The influence of Madame de Pompadour was evidently on the wane ; she was constantly being insulted by the ebullient Madame Adélaïde, and sneered at by Henriette and the Dauphin. The Infanta determined, therefore, that she would return to Versailles and supplant them all.

The Marquise de Pompadour, who was during the year 1747 performing the duties of a Minister by day and endeavouring to entertain the King by her fêtes at night, was wearing herself out. Her chest became weak, she was constantly sickly, and lost her looks.

Taken up as he was with Henriette, the King neglected her, with the result that she became

impotently jealous of Henriette, while hating the effervescent Adélaïde. This young Princess adored Henriette, and constantly backed up her sister, while abusing the Marquise to the King and sneering at her. To checkmate the manœuvres of the fifteen-year-old Adélaïde, Madame de Pompadour contrived to procure the recall from the convent of Fontrevault of her fourteen-year-old sister, Madame Victoire.

This move was a success, as the King instantly took to his newly arrived daughter and showered honours upon her which threw Henriette into the shade.

To Madame Victoire, the mere schoolgirl whose education had been so early cut short, Louis XV. behaved as though she were a grown-up Princess. When he gave her a suite of apartments of her own at Versailles which rivalled those of Madame Henriette in magnificence, the Marquise was triumphant, expecting that now she herself would regain her own importance. Madame de Pompadour was, however, reckoning without the impetuous Adélaïde. This determined and hot-tempered girl raised a tempest at Versailles, fearlessly upbraided her father with his conduct, and declared violently that while she was present at Versailles she would not see her sister Henriette thus eclipsed. The result was that Louis XV. gave way. The youthful Victoire had her grand apartments taken from her, and was relegated to

two humble chambers on the upper story of the Palace.

Thus were the plans of the Marquise frustrated and Adélaïde victorious, but at this time the Infanta Louise appeared upon the scene.

## CHAPTER XXXI

### Riches Amassed by the Marquise de Pompadour

WHEN Madame Infante, as the King's eldest daughter was called in France, arrived at Versailles the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle had just been signed (1748). It was a disgraceful peace for France, which restored all of the captured Low Countries to Austria, signed away likewise to Great Britain her rights in India. This renunciation was the result of the Austrian predilections of the King's family.

The Comte de Maurepas, who was the intimate friend and supporter of the Royal family against Madame de Pompadour, still remained firm with Louis XV., who had apparently quite forgiven his witty, scandal-loving Minister for his former antagonism to the Duchesse de Châteauroux. The Comte hated Madame de Pompadour as much as he had formerly hated Châteauroux, and was detested by Jeanne in return, who longed to get rid of his presence. After the arrival of the Infanta, Maurepas was, however, more secure than ever

in the favour of Louis XV., and the more so as he was the friend of Spain, the friend of the King's eldest daughter, the wife of Don Philip. By the peace she had secured something—not much, a small Italian establishment for her husband. This was described sarcastically by d'Argenson in his *Memoirs* as “an establishment only worthy of a Pope's bastard, to whom originally it was given.” It consisted of the Duchies of Parma, Guastalla, and Piacenza.

The Infanta was received at Versailles with the most ruinous extravagance by her father. She declared that she had come to stay, that she could never live with her husband in the beggarly palace at Parma until it had been repaired from top to bottom. The place was not, she said, fit for a Princess of her rank under any circumstances. As a matter of fact, Louise Élizabeth cared nothing for her husband, and was never so happy as when a thousand miles away from Don Philip. Also she greatly enjoyed being at Versailles, where her first action towards her sister Henriette was by no means a friendly one.

Although, through the interest of the Marquise de Pompadour, Voltaire had contrived to obtain a position at Court, as a gentleman of the chamber and Historiographer of France, Louis, who hated literary people in general, detested the poet. He had contrived to make himself particularly obnoxious by advancing confidently, and asking of



the King, “Is Trajan satisfied?” after the performance of a piece in which he had praised up Louis XV. The King had then stared at Voltaire with a freezing smile, without making any reply.

Leaving the Court after this rebuff, Voltaire had taken refuge with the spiteful Duchesse du Maine at Sceaux. There, prompted by Louise Élizabeth, he wrote a play called *Sémiramis*, the hidden intention of which was to strike at Madame Henriette through the veiled allusions to her undue intimacy with her father.

Having written this spiteful play Voltaire became terribly frightened, and would have liked to prevent its performance. Madame de Pompadour would not have it so; she proceeded to persuade the King to take the piece under his own patronage, and as he only imagined that the cutting allusions dealt with outside persons he allowed it to be performed at Versailles. There, however, others were not so dense as Louis XV., and both Henriette and Adélaïde were greatly angered. Now Voltaire feared the appearance of a parody of his play, which would reveal its hidden allusions, and one such was written. The poet and playwright now retired further from Versailles, to the Court of King Stanislas, at Lunéville in Lorraine, who welcomed him in the name of literature.

Thence he wrote no less than six letters to Queen Marie Lesczynska, to ask her to prevent the parody from being played. The Queen, however,

who did not wish to spare the feelings of either Henriette or her husband, considered that the lesson would do them both good. At the very last moment the Marquise de Pompadour, who had herself become greatly alarmed, contrived to prevent the production of the parody.

Voltaire, however, did well to keep out of the way, as he had blunderingly contrived greatly to incense the Royal family in another matter. While France was already raging at the proposed return of the captured Low Countries to Austria, before the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle was signed, the atheistically inclined philosopher wrote some laudatory verses coupling the names of the King and the Marquise. He was not only thinking by them to please the Monarch and his mistress, but vainly imagined that he could control the wording and terms of the treaty of peace. Voltaire therefore ended up his poem by the line, "Et gardez tous deux vos conquêtes!"

"*Both of you* retain your conquests!" exclaimed the furious Princesses, rushing to the King with a copy of the lines in their hands. "Does he dare, then, to couple that low woman—that"—here they used an opprobrious and vulgar term learned from Maurepas—"yes, that ——— with the Monarch, as though she were his equal? He should be sent to the Bastille!"

Louis was the more angered as he knew only too well of what folly he was about to become

guilty, owing to the promptings of his family, and because he knew that where he himself was concerned the advice of Voltaire was good. The King, however, had gone too far in the negotiations to draw back, even if his pride would have allowed him to do so.

The favourite fell, however, into disrepute, and the Princesses, instigated by the Comte de Maurepas, did all in their power to humble her. The Queen, however, good, honest woman, could not bear to see any one made to suffer, and now showed her goodness of heart by endeavouring to make up to the King's favourite for what she was compelled to endure. Accordingly she appointed the Marquise de Pompadour to the exalted post of Superintendent of the Queen's Household. Marie Lesczynska had the good sense to recognise one thing, and that was that the Marquise, whatever she might be to the King, not only showed the greatest respect towards herself, but always endeavoured to please her. Moreover, she thought that there were excuses to be made for a woman in Pompadour's position, and of her humble birth, whereas for the conduct of her daughters, whether the Infanta, Henriette, or Adélaïde, she could find none whatever. Even when the Marquise had first been proclaimed at the Court as the favourite of Louis XV., the Queen had made a notable display of this kindly disposition.

The King had insisted upon an official presen-

tation of his *bourgeoise* mistress to the Queen, and all the spiteful courtiers, who knew the talent possessed by Marie Leszcynska of saying biting and witty things, looked forward with joyous anticipation to seeing the new favourite humbled. She had a rather common way of speaking, at least Jeanne often made use of terms considered slangy and vulgar at the Court. This trick of speech it was hoped that the Queen would take note of, and perhaps comment upon unkindly.

Queen Marie had been no doubt secretly warned in advance of all of Madame d'Étiole's failings, she was well aware likewise of her unworthy conduct in deserting a husband who adored her, and her surviving daughter, in order to become a Royal courtesan—to supplant herself!

Nevertheless she disappointed all the jealous courtiers and *grandes dames*, by receiving the Marquise with the most kindly condescension. Instead of endeavouring to make Jeanne feel small, the Queen talked most amiably to the woman trembling before her, turning the conversation upon the subject of some great lady whom she appeared to take it for granted to be a mutual friend. By so acting, instead of treating the new favourite as the *bourgeoise* that she was, the Queen kindly assumed that she was as noble as her title, and the equal of the other nobles of the Court, of both sexes, standing by.

The young Marquise was quite overcome by this

gracious amiability, almost too much so to speak. Instead, therefore, of replying to a question put by the Queen as to the health of some noble dame, all that she could stammer out in reply was : "Madame, pray believe that I have the greatest passion to please you."

Touched by the Queen's kindness upon this early occasion, the Marquise never forgot it, and while Jeanne always maintained her deferential manner towards Marie Lesczynska, the Queen, on her side, was grateful for her constant studied humility of bearing. She even on one occasion rewarded her by dining with her when the King was ill at Choisy. This humility, however, the Marquise did not show towards others when she became rich, great, and practically First Minister.

Wealthy she soon became, for Louis, who had been so niggardly towards Madame de Mailly as to allow her to pay for, and then keep himself, the blue silk sheets which she brought to Versailles, showered gold from the first and with both hands upon the wife of Lenormant d'Étioles.

While the country of France was in an utter state of misery, there was always money to be found available for Pompadour. To gain this the King even speculated, guided by the advice of her godfathers Pâris-Duverney. They caused him to win fabulous sums at a time of famine when the people were starving, by forming a corner in wheat, which was sold at exorbitant rates to the poor, after having



been stored in the Royal granaries. More direct ways there were, however, ways best known to Madame de Pompadour herself—the Minister of State—of procuring riches.

Madame d'Étioles had not been the chosen companion of Louis XV. for six months before, in addition to the marquisate and estates of Pompadour, the King provided her with an income of 180,000 livres yearly. A short time afterwards she was able to buy the estate and castle of Selle, at an outlay of 220,000 livres, and, this not contenting her, in the same year the wife of Lenormant d'Étioles acquired Crécy for another three-quarters of a million. Nor were these vast sums the sole rewards of her adultery, for Louis XV. appointed to his favourite half a million a year out of the funds set apart for the maintenance of the King's stables.

Continually after this Madame de Pompadour bought castles and estates, although during the years that the Princesses were made so much of by the King, they it was who received large sums in cash directly from Louis. The Marquise then found means of procuring money, and in quantities, from other sources; the poor provided it somehow! When her putative father, Poisson, was made a noble, she purchased for him the estates of Marigny, and she bought for herself in the same year the Château de Brimborion and the Château d'Aulnay. A little later, the King's favourite provided herself with another large estate—that of



Saint Remi; another huge residence—an hôtel at Compiègne.

She caused her brother to be made a Marquis—the Marquis de Vandières. This name gave rise to a pun much appreciated at Versailles. There the nobles sneeringly called the brother of the King's mistress the Marquis d'Avant-hier—the Marquis of the Day-before-Yesterday!

De Vandières succeeded to the marquise of Marigny upon the death of his father. He was a chubby good-natured sort of an individual, and notorious for two reasons. One was that he carried off by force a young lady four days after she had been married, and after having provided her with an aristocratic name which was not hers, established her in a magnificent hôtel near the Louvre.

The other cause of renown of the Marquis de Marigny was the good sense which he showed in constantly refusing to be made a Minister when, for the sake of the glory of her house, the former Jeanne Poisson would have conferred this honour upon her brother.

While making nobles of the male members of his favourite's family, the King had not forgotten to endow that lady herself with a coat of arms. She modestly selected a shield charged with three towers, charged likewise with the King's own arms in an escutcheon of pretence! To celebrate this famous coat, Louis gave to his mistress some tablets upon which it was inlaid in diamonds.

From the castles and estates mentioned above, it might have been imagined that the Marquise had acquired enough residences ; this, however, was not the case. Nine years after her installation as *maîtresse en titre* Jeanne determined to possess herself of a famous hôtel in Paris itself, one upon which she would make a great additional outlay. She accordingly purchased the splendid residence of the Comte d'Évreux in the Faubourg Saint-Honoré.

Paris was already more than tired of the rule of Madame de Pompadour, although it had as yet only lasted a few years and was to endure for many more.

When therefore, in order to enlarge her newly purchased hôtel, she proceeded calmly to annex and enclose a portion of the Champs Élysées, the people of the capital were furious at the greed of the courtesan, for whose extravagances they knew themselves to be already paying. The mob collected and, shouting terms of abuse against *la grisette*, as they called Jeanne, drove off the workmen whom she had employed. During the night also the whole of the walls of the Hôtel d'Évreux were covered with satires and lampoons of a most offensive and indecent description against Pompadour and the King.

The glory of the Marquise de Pompadour was further enhanced by her being endowed with all the rights of a Duchesse de France in the same year as

she bought this hôtel. She was now in consequence accorded the privilege of the *tabouret*, the stool upon which she and the other Duchesses were permitted to be seated in the presence of Royalty upon all occasions. She was, however, not appointed to any particular Duchy, and always continued to be called not Duchesse but Marquise.

Shortly after this elevation in rank, the supposed daughter of the farmer-general Lenormant de Tourneheim purchased yet another estate. It was one usually only occupied by Princes or Princesses of the Blood-Royal—the lovely Château de Bellevue not far from Paris. All of the immense wealth of the Marquise which remained at her death, in spite of the millions which she had squandered, went to her brother Marigny, as both of her daughters died while she was yet alive. She left money placed all over Europe.

That she had always been a woman of great and innate taste is proved from the fact that most of the pictures and other works of art which the Marquise de Pompadour had purchased were, after her decease, sold for several times as much as she had paid for them. According to her own computation, Jeanne was not yet forty-two at the time of her death in April 1764, as she claimed to have been only born on the 29th day of December, 1722. Accurate historians, however, place the date of her birth a couple of years earlier, making her ten, not twelve, years younger than Louis XV.

For no less than fifteen years during which she practically ruled France before her death, Madame de Pompadour was able to savour the pleasures of her triumph over her enemy the Comte de Maurepas.

This man had been a Secretary of State from the time of his fifteenth year, he being the grandson of the Chancelier de Pontchartrain. He was witty, clever, fond of bon-mots, epigrams, and charades from early youth. His birth not being particularly good, the way in which the young Comte de Maurepas had come into notice had been by banding himself with the boy Duc de la Trémouille and the Duc de Gesvres, the youthful scapegraces of whom, with Fleury's connivance, the King made his early friends.

Louis XV. always liked and encouraged Maurepas until the year after the hated Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle, that is to say until 1749. Even then, never in any way did the King openly show that he disapproved of the man who had been practically a Minister all his life. After the signing of the unpopular peace, however, both Paris and Versailles were flooded with ribald prints and caricatures showing the King, who had formerly been termed "le Bien-Aimé," in a ludicrous and indeed repulsive light. Most of these prints introduced the Marquise de Pompadour with the King, and were by no means edifying, if instructive. For instance, in one she held him bound and bared for the birch, while

the rulers of Europe flogged Louis XV. At the same time vulgar songs were to be heard everywhere—the worst of it was they were not only vulgar but so witty that they were evidently the work of no common person but one well acquainted with the Court. These songs also affected Pompadour and the King, and they were secretly greatly relished by most of the nobles and ladies at Versailles. Louis XV. became, however, perfectly miserable about them, far more so indeed than when, some five years earlier, the soldiers in Flanders had shouted indecent ditties within the hearing of the Duchesse de Châteauroux and her sister de Lauraguais.

The worst of the matter was that neither the clever M. de Berryer, the Lieutenant de Police, nor anybody else could find out for certain whence the satirical ballads originated, although many must have had their shrewd ideas.

Among these was doubtless the Marquise de Pompadour, who was, with the assistance and support of the Duc de Richelieu, to all intents and purposes controlling the State. One day when she visited Maurepas she found this confident friend of the Queen and her daughters saucy in the extreme. The Marquise, having taken with her another lady named the Comtesse d'Estrades, caused herself to be announced to the Comte Phélippeaux de Maurepas.

After condescendingly informing the Comte that,



although people said that she sent for His Majesty's Ministers, she was proving the contrary by coming to them, the haughty favourite came to the point. She had come with the intention of tackling this man whom she so hated, so blurted out at once: "Now, I wish to be informed this, when will you know the author of those libellous songs?"

The lip of Maurepas curled with a satirical smile, as he replied: "When I know, I will inform the King."

At this Madame de Pompadour bristled up. "Monsieur, you do not appear to make too much of the King's mistresses!"

Almost turning his back upon the Marquise, Maurepas responded, in casual tones: "*I have always respected them—of whatever kind they might be!*"

After this terrible setting down, Madame de Pompadour beat a hasty retreat, without even waiting to tell the Comte that she knew him to be himself the author of most of the scurrilous ballads.

Whatever report she may have made of this little encounter to Louis XV., he made no difference in his manner to Maurepas, unless it were to show himself more amiable to him than ever. Especially did he appear to be delighted with the Comte's little anecdotes one day in the middle of April. For some time, in the presence of various nobles who could but notice the high favour in which Maurepas



stood, the King laughed and chatted with him. While taking a cordial farewell of his Minister, Louis then said that he was going off to enjoy himself for a couple of days' relaxation at Choisy. His last words to the Comte were : "Amuse yourself thoroughly while I am away."

Now comes the sequel, which reminds one much of the miserable duplicity of Louis at the time of the disgrace of M. le Duc and the Marquise de Prie. Two days later, the Comte de Maurepas received a peremptory note from Louis XV. exiling him to Bourges. This letter distinctly ordered him not even to go to his own estate of Pontchartrain, which the King said was "too near Versailles and Paris."

Thus was Madame de Pompadour avenged !

As in the case of Germain Louis de Chauvelin, the Keeper of the Seals, the banishment of Maurepas was to prove perpetual. Never so long as he lived, and he reigned for ten years after the death of Madame de Pompadour, did Louis XV. allow the Comte de Maurepas to return to the Court, despite the outcry made by the members of the Royal family at the loss of their favourite.

With this signal triumph on the part of the King's favourite in 1749, we must for the present take leave of the Marquise de Pompadour.



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